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THE PEOPLE
AND
THE PRIEST

REV. R.E.
WELSH



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THE PEOPLE AND THE
PRIEST

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THE PEOPLE

AND



THE PRIEST



BY · THE · REV.

R. E. WELSH, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "IN RE-

LIEF OF DOUBT"



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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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Dedicated

TO

J R. MACDONALD

A

TRIBUTE

TO

THE CATHOLICITY OF HIS SPIRIT

AND

THE LARGENESS OF HIS HEART

INTRODUCTORY

OLD questions over which ten generations have fought might be supposed to have passed beyond the stage of profitable discussion. But the triangular contest now proceeding between the Reformed, the Anglo-Catholic, and the Roman Catholic Churches, carrying with it momentous issues for this country, calls for the re-statement of the truths involved.

It will not be believed possible, and probably it is not possible, to discuss inter-Church controversies in an entirely impartial spirit, with greater regard for truth than for partisan victory. The "personal equation"—early training, mental temperament, and the course of one's life—cannot but affect the point of view. One must, none the less, make the best attempt possible to deal fairly with views from the form of which one differs. Macaulay said that he had lived so long in a country where the people worshipped cows that he thought little of the differences between Christians! Living in a Buddhist country brought me the delight of seeing elements of good even in Buddhism. In the present little volume a sympathetic endeavour is made to discriminate between encrusted truth

Introductory

and veiled error in kindred systems of Christian faith and practice.

A hue and cry is raised against intolerance—rightly enough; but not less intolerable is moral supineness in presence of the silent, steady war now proceeding, whose issues, for better or for worse, will be seen in the social and national as well as in the religious condition of generations coming. There is surely no need to deny terms of Christian brotherhood to those from whom we differ deeply, much less to brand them as *bad* because they are antagonists in controversy. But the good intentions of earnest men do not prevent their misguided religious systems from working mischief by restraining light and freedom and by perverting the people's morals. While respecting each other as sincere Christian brethren, men must yet contend strenuously for truth. If in the conflict of convictions this respect were mutual, great would be the gain.

Sectarianism is sufficiently deplorable—often individualism run wild. Unity is great; but truth is greater. Greatest of all is charity; but charity lapsing into tolerant indifference is no longer charity—only callousness. Charity must rule the fight for truth, but must not stop it. In Milton's words, "let truth and error grapple."

Had the conditions under which these pages were written permitted, fuller justice might have

Introductory

been done to the difficult problems raised. To treat them adequately would require years and tomes. Many who do not want tomes of learned studies may be helped by brief and direct statements of essential points.

In the title, "the Priest"—the Anglo-Catholic being even more prominently in view than the Roman Catholic priest—stands for the entire sacerdotal and ritual system of which, with his claim of spiritual rights and authority, he is the representative; "the People," for non-ecclesiastical human nature and its unspoilt instincts, for the inalienable rights and privileges and the moral interests of the laity, especially for their right of appeal to the original charter of Christian truth and privilege given by the Divine Founder of the Church.

To the Rev. George M'Arthur, M.A., whose editorial labours on the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the *Century Dictionary*, etc., will never be fully known, I am much indebted for assistance in revising the proofs.

R. E. W.

ST GEORGE'S,
BRONDESBURY, N.W.
July 1898.

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I

The Spell of Catholicism

OVER the hearts and minds of multitudes the Catholic ideal continues to cast its fascinating charms. Not only are large numbers of Churchmen yielding to the attractions of high ritual and Catholic doctrine; we hear also of wives and daughters of Dissenters, and sons of sturdy Presbyterians—notable instances are easily called to mind as one writes—who have been fascinated by the promise of peace in the Catholic fold. The extent of the drift, however, is not measured by the numbers who become Roman or Anglican Catholics. Through striking public functions, during travel on the Continent, at schools and universities, and in the press, the eyes and minds of many among the best class in the community are being agreeably familiarised with Ritualist worship and Mediæval doctrine. This is one pronounced element in the “Zeitgeist,” in the currents of the time, contending against sceptical and other adverse tides.

The People and the Priest

Wherein lies this spell? What are the attractions which captivate such varied types of mind?

Tempera-
ment and
Taste

(i) Temperament and taste have much to do with the power of the Catholic ideal. Some are naturally susceptible to the fascinations of gorgeous ceremonials and the sights and sounds of impressive devotions. Some among the ignorant and low-bred love a show. Others in higher grades of society are accustomed to court ceremony and social functions and naturally expect the Church and its worship to be fashioned in the same courtly style. Still others, to be found among all classes of the community, love to see ideas in concrete, dramatic form. There are, of course, many to whom music makes an irresistible appeal, who feel most deeply devotional when laid under the entrancing thrill of cathedral choir or orchestra, who are carried by boys' voices up as on wings to heaven's gate.

Wings
for the
Soul

Those who hold to severe forms of worship may not fully realise, or they may callously ignore, this craving for expression and expansion of soul in sweet and swelling music, in harmonious and uplifting devotions. But it exists; it is not to be despised as undivine; and it gives us one deep secret of the present "Catholic revival." And there are Churches that know how to make use of this natural craving.

Some, however, of those who are attracted

The Spell of Catholicism

by the beauty and impressiveness of high ritual are unaware that every vestment, every article in use, and every act and attitude of worship has a doctrinal significance, and, in the majority of instances, is charged with sacerdotal teaching. Some may declare that they care not what the doctrines behind the service may be—that they are glad to be lifted above themselves, to be charmed out of prosaic earthliness by the kindling of their higher sensibilities.

Behind
the
Charm

It is to be feared that one could influence such minds but little by proving that much of the ritual in vogue contains such teaching as, if set down in words, they would hesitate to accept. Chasuble and stole and incense may be perfectly innocent in themselves; but they are no longer innocent and unimportant when they are intended to express the idea that the minister is a priest, is standing between man and God, and is offering a sacrifice on man's behalf.

But such minds ought, at any rate, to consider whether their devotions are what they seem. Are these alive with religious, intelligent sense of God, with true spirituality? Or are the worshippers simply stirred in their nerve-centres, delicately and delightfully exhilarated in their finer sensibilities? There is a pleasure in solemn reverie under reverberating music, and it may be tinged with religious

Sense or
Spirit?

The People and the Priest

emotion ; but it may even then have very little of the spirit's intelligent communion with the living, conscious, moral Spirit of the Father-God. The satisfaction which swelling music gives is not necessarily religious. If it be associated with religion, it is not by any means a substitute for the intelligent, personal intercourse of mind and heart with a clearly-realised God.

Music and ritual appeal to ear and eye, and the agreeable indulgence which these excite may be elevating to a certain part of one's nature, but it is after all an indulgence of the higher senses of sound and sight only. Some minds may be able to rise beyond them into intimate personal, conscious communion with a personal, conscious God. But many are lifted only as though to the roof of the church, are chiefly conscious of their own emotions and exhilaration, and are not face to face, soul to soul, mind to mind, with God and His character. Herein lurks a subtle deception for those of keen natural sensibilities. Here lies the common moral danger of ritualistic worship.

**Confid-
ants and
Sym-
pathy**

(ii) A second strong attraction which the Catholic Church offers is the sympathy it affords troubled hearts in receiving their sacred secret confessions of weakness, sin, and perplexity. People who indulge their delight in describing the scandals of the Confessional are often callous to the craving of jaded souls for a privileged consultation with true

The Spell of Catholicism

priestly men of God. Ideally this attraction is one which most can appreciate, and even average Protestants will acknowledge that with this, if with no other, part of Catholicism they have a kindly sympathy. The subject is important, and must be treated in later chapters (xiii. and xiv.).

(iii) Prominent among the attractions of the Catholic Church is the visible authority which it offers to the devout mind. **Visible Authority**

All acknowledge how difficult it is to pray to the invisible, to see the unseen, to depend on the still small voice within, and to keep up the spiritual activities of the soul. How much easier the Christian life had been, one imagines, if Christ were living here and now, if one's eye might see and one's ear might hear Him, and an audible response might be obtained to the soul's appeals.

Many minds feel the need of such an external and visible authority. They have difficulty in sharing Tennyson's ideal sentiment—

“ Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and spirit with Spirit
can meet ;

Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.”

They find it hard to carry on devotions except through the outward machinery of spokesmen and forms. They can scarcely realise that their prayers are heard and their sins are positively forgiven, unless they have audible assurances through **Faith v. Sight**

The People and the Priest

authorised agencies. Unable to rely upon the Indwelling Spirit, they require priests — authoritative guides.

But with what result? With the result that their souls miss the higher spiritual development. They become limited by that which seems to assist them. The religious life thus dependent on external aids becomes externalised. The piety which relies upon priestly mechanism tends to become mechanical. At any rate its soul is confined within the mechanism. Fresh, new, independent visions of divine things, personal expansion and development, are lost or impeded.

The
Training
of the
Spirit

The soul's sight is quickened, the soul's hearing is sharpened, by the training and development of the soul which is involved in cultivating a purely spiritual religion. The difficulty to faith is great; but the soul, like the body, grows by conquering difficulty. It is in struggle and conflict, not in contentment with external aids, that the soul wakes and expands. If a man take a course of Browning, even if he study the poet's easier pieces only, can he ever again think that it is on the whole a gain to depend on the visible and the humanly authoritative for the soul's life?

Jesus Christ Himself did not provide for this craving for visible authority. For He declared, "It is expedient for you that I go away." The external presence, He meant, would be a calamity

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if permanent. If He went away they would be thrown in upon the spiritual Presence. True worship would then be in spirit.

Even to have Christ physically in the Pontiff's seat on earth—a form of the Second Coming which some Protestants anticipate—would be detrimental to the spirituality of Christians. They would depend upon an external pronouncement for every occasion, and would remain in infancy of soul. Now, depending upon a Spirit as an indwelling guide and enlightener, they rise up into spiritual maturity, and their own higher powers expand, straining up towards the Divine. (See Chapter vii.).

(iv) One other attraction of the Catholic Church is the refuge it offers to minds tossed upon seas of intellectual doubt. Escape
from
Doubt

The *Confessio Viatoris* of Mr C. Kegan Paul is a case representative of many. Neither in the Evangelical creed nor in Agnosticism can they find mental rest. Repelled from mere negation and denial, yet unable to find sufficient solid ground of certainty anywhere among the varying forms of opinion, wearied with the endless strife, they fling themselves into the arms of the Church which offers to undertake mental responsibilities and relieve the individual of private judgment. So they end the civil war within themselves, yielding the throne of their intelligence to an outside authority which assures them of safety.

The People and the Priest

Rebound and Rest

This result is in many cases a natural rebound from scepticism, or from a perilous approach to the dark abyss of intellectual nihilism. The roving wanderer from creed to creed is, perhaps, glad ultimately to shelter his mind in a system so ancient, assuring, and convenient.

And, doubtless, a certain happiness follows. But of what sort is the happiness? It is that which comes from unbending the strained bow, throwing down arms, escaping from strife. The sense of rest which Catholic converts speak of is no assurance of *truth*; for the same joy of relief meets every mind that, after long strain, ends by surrendering wholly to *any* strong form of faith.

But if the "Catholic" Church is selected on intelligent grounds, and its claims admitted for rational reasons, the act of surrender is the most stupendous act of private judgment possible to the human mind. If it be sought in blind desperation as a refuge for a doubt-driven mind, then it is a flight from realities in a mood of panic, an act that unmans the man, an abandonment of his rational existence, a suppression of his God-given intelligence.

II

Ritual and Vestments

BROWNING was alike unjust and short-sighted —if not poking sly fun—when he allowed himself to apply the ungracious phrase “the needlework of noodledom” to the vestments worn by priests. On the contrary, no one can well forget that among Ritualists have been, and still are, not a few men of the strongest intellect, of the loftiest spirit, of the most devoted piety, who have put the Evangelicals to shame by their passionate earnestness and their untiring labours among the common multitude. But a man’s earnestness, while evidence of a force of good in him, does not prove him right. Theosophists, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Buddhists, and Mohammedans have all been earnest in their season. Earnestness animates many a misdirected aim, is the hammer that drives home now truth and now error.

Two
Tributes

The Catholic Revival, again, was the means of effecting a sorely-needed improvement in the conduct of Church services, which had previously

The People and the Priest

been slovenly and dull, in the taste for the best music in public worship, and in the care of Church edifices. Further, it has created a signal revival of religious devotion. Quickened religious life embodies itself in different forms at different times; and the new flood of religious feeling and energy which has spread over England has, one half of it, flowed in Ritualistic courses. But that does not settle the question whether Ritualism is, over the whole, a permanent gain, and especially whether its further advance can justify itself in the eyes of the British people. Will the British people seek fairly and dispassionately to consider and appraise the present movement towards high ritual and sacerdotal teaching?

The good
in Ritual-
ism

Is there anything to justify the present outcry against Ritualism and the fear of returning Romanism? That the Church of Rome is gaining ground in this country is denied in some quarters, and triumphantly proclaimed or loudly lamented in others.¹ Whether the unrecorded losses balance the reported gains is uncertain; but quite certain it is that Sacerdotal Ritualism is being borne upon a flowing tide along the stream of British thought and feeling. The "sacerdos" or priest is, to an increasing extent, centring religion in his functions, more boldly claiming the sole right and the

How the
Tide runs

¹ An English Cardinal is reported as claiming that there are now 700 to 800 conversions to Rome per month.

Ritual and Vestments

power to make Church sacraments effective and to act as the representative of devout men before God and the vicar of Christ before men. Current doctrinal teaching will be adduced at a later point to attest this statement, and its value will be reviewed and estimated. Meanwhile the facts are more evident in the growth of high Ritual.

What are the facts? ¹

The *Tourist's Church Guide*, published by the English Church Union, shows the following increase in the number of churches with respect to the leading points of ceremonial between 1882 and 1898:

	In 1882.	In 1898
Eastward Position	1,662	7,044
Eucharistic Vestments	336	2,026
Incense	9	381
Altar Lights at Holy Eucharist . .	581	4,334
Mixed Chalice	...	4,030

The President of the English Church Union, Lord Halifax, at its Annual Meeting, asserted that altar lights, eucharistic vestments, incense, and the mixed chalice are established in the Church

The "Six Points," and others

¹ Of one Anglo-Catholic manual alone, *The Catholic Religion*, between one and two hundred thousand copies have been sold. Gace's *Some Questions of the Church Catechism* is in its fourteenth edition.

The People and the Priest

beyond controversy, and he claimed "the sanction of the whole Church of Christ" for "the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the need of prayers for the faithful departed in the authorised services of the Church, the pleading in the Holy Mysteries the Sacrifice of the Cross on their behalf [*i.e.* Masses for the dead, forbidden by the XXXIX. Articles as 'blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits'], the restoring of Unction for the sick [*i.e.* Extreme Unction],"¹ and he added a word in favour of the Veneration of the Cross. Thousands of English Church clergymen belong to the Union to which these statements were made. In the more "Advanced" Churches Romish practices of a more pronounced order—the Festival of Corpus Christi, the Sprinkling of the congregation with holy water, non-communicating attendance at the Celebration of the Eucharist, the Mass for children, the teaching of the "Hail Mary" in schools, &c.—are openly carried on.

**Mediæval
"Uses"** When favour is avowed for these quasi-Roman practices, and for crucifixes, the Stations of the Cross, the "Tabernacle" for the "Host"; when priests claim the right to use in their private devotions before the altar forms and "Uses" from Roman sources which it would be illegal for them to employ publicly; when elastic terms and rubrics are stretched to the utmost degree so as to include

¹ See *Church Times*, 17th June 1898.

Ritual and Vestments

as much as possible of Mediæval usage, it is vain to expect that Englishmen will not look very anxiously on the movement as leading back towards Rome. It is not a foolish alarm. The bald facts cannot be glozed over by minimising explanations. When priests of the Church of England, from fear lest their "orders" be not valid, are, as we are credibly assured, asking and receiving ordination secretly from Roman Bishops, the meaning of the Sacerdotal drift is unmistakable.

Secret Societies are admittedly playing an important part in this movement. Before me lies the monthly "Intercessory Paper" of "The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament"—in use among many members in the writer's parish—which shows that the object is to restore Roman practices as nearly as possible without the restoration of Rome's supremacy.¹ The Order of Corporate Reunion does not hesitate to seek the supremacy of Rome over the whole "Catholic" Church. The Guild of All Souls—having on its list between six and seven hundred English clergymen—aims

¹ Intercessions are asked—large numbers of particular parishes, colleges, etc., being specified as requiring such intercessions—"that the Holy Eucharist may be more frequently offered for the Repose of the Souls of the Faithful Departed"—with special mention of Bishop Twells, 16 priests, 222 persons, most of whose initials are given; "that obstacles to the due and reverent Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament for the Sick may be removed, and that the use of

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to reintroduce the doctrine of Purgatory and the celebration of Masses for the Dead. The Society of St Edmund—which professed to dissolve itself owing to public notoriety, but which re-organised itself under the name of the Alcuin Club—pays homage to the Virgin, venerates the Cross—"Behold the wood of the Cross; let us adore it"—and uses prayers which speak of "our Pope." There are also the Society of the Holy Cross—one of the most powerful of them all—and the Order of the Holy Redeemer, whose veiled objects are similarly quasi-Roman.

Are the British people, who have a wholesome horror of subterranean operations by Secret Societies, prepared to see such stealthy "Orders" honeycomb the National Church and undermine the Reformed religion bought in past centuries at such great cost?

There is no need to colour or swell the facts to the verge of exaggeration in order to heighten the effect and justify the plea for serious consideration of the situation on the part of all Englishmen. In

the Sacrament of Holy Unction may be restored throughout the Anglican Church"; "that there may be a due use of Sacramental Confession in view of the Holy Sacrament"; "that obstacles may be removed to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the traditional and ancient Ceremonial sanctioned by the Church"; and "that there may be a more widespread belief in the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice."

Ritual and Vestments

most quarters the name of Protestant—in itself by no means a satisfactory title, being a negative, yet an honourable name, descriptive of a very positive and primitive form of Christianity—is repudiated; and the Reformation, apart from its reform of Indulgences and immoralities, and its refusal of Papal Supremacy, is deplored. The avowed aim of the ruling spirits is to restore as much as possible of the ceremonial in use when the Church of the West was undivided.

“The chief impression that has been left on my mind,” a Roman Catholic observer of credit has said, “by the services in the ‘Advanced’ Ritualistic churches that I have visited is the way in which the Anglican Communion Service resembles the Roman Catholic Mass”—and the term Mass for it is openly claimed as fit and innocent; “but for the use of the English language, any one not accustomed to attend Roman Catholic churches might easily be deceived as to his whereabouts.”

It is not my business here to discuss the question how far these practices receive sanction from the Prayer Book and the decisions of the Privy Council. The Prayer Book, as a compromise between extremes, uses ambiguous expressions and is not throughout self-consistent. But it was composed for a Church which had broken with the Church of Rome, and that deliberate act of disruption was surely intended to

“No Protestantism”

The
Prayer
Book

The People and the Priest

declare a serious departure from Romanism. Sacerdotal Ritualists are certainly straining to its utmost stretch the language of the Prayer Book, which in the main supports the moderate results of the Reformation. The matter, however, which concerns us in the present volume, is the question whether the Ritualistic movement has its face towards Rome, how far it is in keeping with Christ's own Christianity, and what are its effects.

Now what is the inner meaning of Ritualism, what are its tendencies and fruits, and can it justify itself by anything present in the original religion of our Lord Jesus?

In these days of broad charity and easy tolerance one is naturally disposed to look on questions of candles and ecclesiastical ornaments and robes with profound indifference, as matters of little or no consequence. Why not pass such practices lightly by as mere fashions in religion? No doubt religion has its fashions, which change with the changing tastes of new generations; and probably fashion has something to do with the present popularity of Ritualism.

“Big-
endians”
and
“Little-
endians”

To Dean Swift as “Gulliver” the dispute between Roman Catholics and Protestants was all a wrangle about the convenient end at which true believers should break their eggs! But to treat it as a contest between Big-endians and Little-endians, as a matter of ecclesiastical fashion only,

Ritual and Vestments

would be to take a very superficial view of it Nor is Anglo-Catholicism "*playing* at Romanism"; it is seriously intended, and based on firm principle.

Comparatively innocent in itself, Ritualism has momentous importance because each rite and vestment has deep doctrinal significance. Cope, chasuble, stole, devotional acts and attitudes, are symbols of sacerdotal claims and dogmas. They are linked with belief in the Real Presence in the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ and the priest's power to convey absolution. At Waterloo, the uniform of French soldiers was not a mere matter of indifference to Wellington, not only a trifle of colour and lace. In the hour when great national destinies were at stake on the field of battle mere uniform was the badge of friend or foe. Theoretically and apart by themselves, items of ritual strike us as simply matters of taste. And, doubtless, many Anglicans merely regard them as appropriate means of beautifying the service and making it more impressive. But, as used in churches of certain schools, they are the uniform and badge of a strong, resolute sacerdotal and sacramentarian order.

Harmless
Uniform?

The priest's vestments are commonly supposed to have been, from the early centuries, the distinctive mark of the clergy, and to have been drawn from the Temple priesthood and what

The People and the Priest

Aaron's Ward- robe

Milton calls "Aaron's wardrobe." In point of fact, they were not in common use till about half-way down the Christian era; and in their original form they were worn alike by laity and clergy.

Clerical vestments in their first form, Dean Stanley tells us in his *Christian Institutions*, were nothing more than the ordinary clothes worn by the people at different places and times.

The alb (white) was the ancient Roman tunic or vest, the *camisia* or chemise. The surplice was the *super-pellicium*, in its modern equivalent pellisse, or over-fur worn by the Northmen over their inner garment of sheepskin or otter-skin. The chasuble was the *casula*, the slang name given by Italian labourers to their *capote* or coat. The dalmatic was the sleeveless under-shirt worn in Dalmatia, from which it took its name. The cope was the *copa* or *capa* (also called *pluviale*), a waterproof cape. The cassock was the *casaca*, or long overall. The stole was the handkerchief worn as a scarf or used for a handkerchief's other purposes. The mitre was the turban, creased at the crown with folding, the cleft being afterwards taken as a symbol of the cloven tongues of the Holy Ghost.

Old Lay Garments

These were not robes peculiar to the clergy; they did not mark off the priesthood as a separate class; they were worn by all alike, the common

Ritual and Vestments

dress of the people. If we followed the early *principle*, rather than the mediæval fashion, the clergy would wear the clothes in general use among the men of our own day.¹ Jerome knew nothing of modern vestments; "we ought not to enter the Holy of Holies with any sort of every-day clothing soiled from the use of life, but handle the Lord's sacrament with a clean conscience and *clean clothes!*"

That certain vestments were originally worn by the common people and drawn from neither Jewish nor Pagan Temple is no reason why they ought not to be worn by Christian priests to-day. But when they are imposed as the necessary historic marks of the true priest and his priestly functions, when they are made the ground of pitched battles, even to clerical bloodshed, we point out the fact that they were at one time the dress of all the *laity* and have had this symbolic significance foisted on them. To us they are points of comparative indifference—mere "anise and cummin"; and, were they in like manner matters of mere taste or preference and of equal indifference to those who use them, we should have less, if anything, to say about them. But it is not *we* who set value on their absence or presence; it is the

What it all means

¹ In like manner, the white tie and black coat worn by many ministers are remnants of the dress formerly worn by all gentlemen.

The People and the Priest

Ritualist and Romanist who lay stress on them. Articles that were originally shirts, smock-frocks, overalls, capes, and handkerchiefs Roman Catholics took over and invested with sacerdotal and sacramentarian significance, and Ritualists to-day likewise take up arms for their use as the badge of their priestly functions.¹ What would be otherwise comparatively innocent as appropriate robes we are compelled to oppose, not on their own account, but because they are endowed with importance, and demanded as symbols of semi-Romish claims and doctrine.

Truth in Crystals

Further, Ritualism tends to centre interest on the externals of religious functions. To the Ritualist, vestments are not mere "man-millinery," as he rightfully boasts. He endows all his rites and robes, forms and Church ornaments, with religious meaning. The altar is the place where the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ is offered to God; the lights on the altar represent the light of joy, truth, and devotion in the hearts of worshippers. Incense stands for prayer; the long "stole" for the yoke of Christ; the chasuble for Christ's

¹ "By ceremonial and accessories, the Church bears witness to the truths of the Real Presence and the Eucharistic Sacrifice." *The Catholic Religion* (Anglo-Catholic manual), p. 357, by Rev. Vernon Stanley, with preface by the venerated Canon T. T. Carter, of Christ Church, Oxford, and of Clewer.

Ritual and Vestments

“purple robe” at His condemnation; the alb for innocence, etc.¹

The Ritualist is ever ready to explain this symbolism, and desires you to see the teaching symbolised. But what is intended to be transparent as glass, through which you may see spiritual truth, is to most people opaque, arresting the eye, concealing the inner spiritual realities, so that the mind is occupied with material objects. That devout hearts may and do, through the channel of these ceremonies and symbols, pour forth their devotion to God is happily true enough. But true also is it, and more common, that high ritual tends to externalise worship, makes its appeal to and pleases the senses, and satisfies with æsthetic emotion and sensuous thrill. Religion under such conditions is likely to become a matter of impressions, unintelligent moods of mystical and almost superstitious feeling. When so much prominence is given, and so great sacerdotal value is ascribed, to rites and forms and attitudes, these only too easily pass into formality—and that, not because nature in Catholics is inferior to nature in Protestants, but because such is the universal tendency of human nature always in like cases. The temptation is to forget the essential elements of devotion.

The
Appeal
to the
Senses

I appeal not to what usages ruled in mediæval

¹ See *Why and Wherefore* by Rev. Harry Wilson.

The People and the Priest

The
Appeal to
Christ

times, but to Christ the final authority. "In spirit and in truth": there you have the only vital factor in worship, as our Lord analysed it. Looking into the Gospels with open, unprejudiced eye, can we say that Christ was a Ritualist? Did He set store by vestments, rites, and a priestly caste? I not only ask whether such things appear in the memoirs of His life; I ask, did not He pass quite beyond the region of such matters of ritual, and lift his followers up into the pure air of faith, love, and service, into direct communion of the human heart with God? And can we imagine Him coming among us and requiring that for true worship churches shall have altar-lights at midday, incense, holy water, genuflections¹ and vestments?

Even if He appreciated devotion which came through these channels from people who had been all their lives accustomed to such aids and forms—as appreciate and honour it He would, whenever sincerely intended, even from an earnest Buddhist—can we conceive Him carrying on a crusade for the return of all Christian people to such mediæval usages, and laying stress on

¹ Bowing at the name of Jesus—said to have been introduced as a test and a token of belief in Christ's Divinity during the Arian heresy—has no support from Phil. ii. 10. It is not "*at* the name of Jesus," but "*in* the name of Jesus every knee shall bow" (see Rev. Ver.), that is to say, it is *in and through Christ* that all men shall come to pay homage to God.

Ritual and Vestments

them as requisites of worship? And was St Paul a Ritualist? We know what St Peter's vestment was—a fisher's coat girt about his naked body.

Retrograde and not "advanced" is this Ritual and Priestly revival. It harks back—but not far enough, and at the same time too far. It is not a return to Christ. It faces towards Mediæval Romanism; and what authority have the Middle Ages, or even the early Fathers, for us, more than any later or earlier age? It leaps the first Apostles' and their Master's practice, and re-suscitates the Jewish priesthood and ceremonial. Ritualists go back to the Hebrew Temple for precedents to support their use of vestments and a sacrificing priesthood. Surely they undervalue the patent fact that in the Church of the New Testament no portion of Jewish sacerdotal ritualism is retained. The only rites reflected in these sacred records as authorised by our Lord are the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Does not the Epistle to the Hebrews deliberately declare that the old system had passed away, and that all priestly symbols were fulfilled and ended in Christ?

Back-
ward—
how far?

The movement must be pronounced reactionary. It seeks to set back the clock. It reverses historic evolution in religion. It is a return to religious Kindergarten, suited only to an age of spiritual infancy.

III

Successors to the Apostles

**The
Apostolic
Chain**

THERE is something structurally grand about the fundamental doctrine on which the Roman and Anglo-Catholic Churches rest. Their sacerdotal functions and powers depend upon the theory that Christ organised a Visible Church under the Apostles as its authorised staff of officers; that the Apostles ordained their successors, and these in turn their successors; that to the Apostles and their line of successors were entrusted the monopoly of the sacraments and of the true faith, and authority over the souls of Christians; particularly that Christ and His Apostles instituted a threefold order of Church authorities, the three orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (in the Roman Church the Pope being Chief Bishop and ruling Pontiff); that the Apostolic Succession depended upon the unbroken continuity of Bishops throughout the centuries; that only in this priestly succession can be found the channel of saving grace; that all outside this episcopal and apostolic line have been wicked schismatics

Successors to the Apostles

with only mock-sacraments and sham Church rights.

Now the claim to Apostolic Succession through Bishops or Popes begs a question which, to say the least, history shews to be extremely doubtful.

The greatest scholars in the land have shewn that there were no Bishops (as understood to-day) in the New Testament Church. Bishop Lightfoot, whose learning, character, and work all Christians honour, and Professor Hatch, and Canon Gore himself, the distinguished High Churchman, admit or rather declare that the "episcopos" (translated "bishop," but literally "overseer") was the equal of the "presbuteros" (translated "elder.")¹ Just as "preacher" and "pastor" are to-day different names for the same man, indicating two different modes of his work, so "overseer" (episcopos) and "elder" (presbuteros) indicated, not separate offices, but different aspects of the same man's position—one the oversight of the flock, the other his seniority and wisdom as a ruler.

All the greatest scholars now admit that the "bishop" or "overseer" was the local minister of a congregation, and that it was not till after, though it was soon after, New Testament times that one was set over other ministers in the modern sense of a "bishop."

¹ See Lightfoot's *Dissertations on the Apostolic Age*.

Hatch's *Organisation of the Early Christian Churches*.

What
Scholars
say

The People and the Priest

Did
Apostles
ordain
Apostles?

The Apostles *did* ordain a ministry for the Church, namely, presbyters and deacons. Were these men, then, ordained by the Apostles as their *successors*? No; Catholics do not say so; and it is made clear that presbyters were ordained as presbyters, and not as either apostles or as bishops in the modern sense.¹ Did they afterwards ordain *another* order, superior to presbyters? If they had done so, that order would have been an order of Apostles—and the expression “*Apostolic* Succession” would then be proper. If they ordained bishops in the modern sense, as superiors to *presbyter-episcopoi*, these were not then the same order as Apostles, and could not be their full and equal successors. *But* there is no mention whatever in the New Testament of the Apostles having ever ordained *any* order in addition to presbyters and deacons. That they created either another order of bishops or ordained successors has no foundation at all in sacred or profane history, and is a pure assumption.

Mission-
aries as
Apostles

Missionaries are generic successors to the Apostles, for the work and functions of the two are kindred in nature. They “go into all the

¹ In his well-known *Christian Doctrine Bible Truth* Mr Sadler says: “Did these men, at the death of the Apostle, become overseers of local churches, *i.e.* diocesan bishops? Probably not.” And he allows “a gap of some seventy years” before the episcopate was established.

Successors to the Apostles

world and preach the Gospel," baptising, organising young Churches, ordaining presbyters over them, and supervising them till they are strong enough to stand by themselves. These men—sent-out—do the same work as the Apostles (literally, "those sent-out") as pioneers; and in this sense the Apostles *have* successors, not as a separate "order" permanently superior to presbyters, but as a class of the regular ministry devoted to this pioneering purpose. On the other hand, they have *no* successors *set up* permanently in each locality and *set over* the other ministers.

If the contention be only that out of the *germs* and the amorphic conditions of the early Church there gradually evolved, at the close of the first and the beginning of the second centuries, a class of "superintendents" such as that organised in Presbyterian Scotland in Knox's time, and that that class crystallised into an episcopate in the modern sense, we make no objection.

For it is certainly not the object of these pages to argue that the Episcopal system of Church government is not as *legitimate* as any other. *No* system of Church government that is in vogue to-day can find its full equivalent existing in the New Testament times.¹ Further, it would be

¹ Mr Sadler seems to think that some ecclesiastical system *must* have been set up by Christ in complete form, that it could not have been given only in essential germs and left to

The People and the Priest

Legitimate or necessary?

foolish and irrational to say that the Church should not go beyond the original Church in organising itself so as to serve later needs and meet more complex conditions. But no development of this kind can rightly be imposed as the *necessary* constituent of a Christian Church. Its serviceableness is its claim to acceptance, so long as it does not oppose itself to Apostolic regulations. Some systems may be better, some worse, more or less in harmony with principles set forth in New Testament times; but none of them can be declared vital to a Church's existence and rights.

It may be well to have bishops, or, for argument's sake, to have a Chief Bishop over all—a Pope (Papa)—or it may not; that is not the issue here. But when brethren declare that these are *indispensable*, even for saving grace, we declare in turn, what the highest scholars among Episcopal dignitaries say, that there were no bishops at all (in the modern sense) in the primitive Church of the Apostles, nor for years afterwards.

The first Link

Thus, in the long chain of supposed Apostolic Succession, the very first link is missing!

Historic Continuity

If it be merely historic continuity that is insisted develop. As well assume that the Bible *must* have been given complete at once. We know that Scripture was a gradual growth, and we likewise know (*cf.* Hatch, etc.) that the Church evolved into different systems, none divinely dictated, and each legitimate.

Successors to the Apostles

on and prized, such continuity is in the possession of the Anglican Church no more than, say, of the Scottish Presbyterian Church, whose ministers—if we must argue thus—have in unbroken line received ordination from their predecessors through the centuries. “But the Presbyterian Church severed itself from the one Church at the Reformation.” Not otherwise than did the Church of England. We all have similar historic continuity, marked by *changes* but not *broken*. “But we have bishops.” So have we, for that matter,—the bishops (presbyters) that originally existed in the New Testament Church; for the modern bishop, being a later development, is not vital to a Church.

We all, to take a truer, broader view, however, have the same religious inheritance, the same Scriptures, the same theological creed, the same holy traditions, the same primary sacraments, the same heritage of spiritual influences, and are similarly linked through the centuries with the Apostles and the Founder of the Church. Thus we all have the true Apostolic succession, in proportion as we have entered into possession of the best that the past history of Christianity has given us; and *this* succession is not a technicality in organisation, but the inheritance of what is spiritually vital and saving in the religion of Christ.

Besides, St Paul did not receive his “orders”

The
Common
Heritage

The People and the Priest

In the
Line of
St Paul

from the Twelve Apostles or any other men. It is one of the points he makes in his Epistles. "But he was directly called to an Apostle's work by the Ascended Christ." A welcome answer! So, we have *one* who was sent of God and yet was not ordained by the Apostles,—was, in fact, an "irregular," and was regarded as such at the time, but authenticated by "the signs that follow an apostle." It is enough to be in the Succession of St Paul, if not in the Episcopal Succession.

In some such fashion have numbers of the men and women used by God in carrying grace to multitudes of hearts been commissioned—such as Mr Moody and Mrs Catherine Booth. The Spirit of Christ has directly called them by immediate spiritual revelation and sent them forth without any Church's "orders." That is no argument against Churches, for the sake of regular orderliness, setting apart a ministry by ordination; but it shews that the divine commission is not confined within the bounds of a priesthood or any other "order."

"No
Bishop,
no
Church"

But, while this is true and in its way decisive, it is not the main point in the reply to the Catholic's claim.

Why is so much stress laid upon Apostolic Succession? Why make Bishops the fundamental necessity? Why not a certain creed, or a certain type of character? Then all Christian people of sound faith and good life would be included

Successors to the Apostles

within the pale. Why select a point of organisation, a single office in a system, and constitute that the necessary factor in a Church? A Church with three orders, Bishops, Priests and Deacons, is a Church, but, having only the second and third, without the first, it is a bogus Church! Is there such an indispensable virtue in one priest set over other priests that without him the whole organisation must cease to be a Church at all, losing the divine presence and grace? An office, too, that is not even named in the primitive Church of the first century! Without this part of the machinery, could the Christian Society not "go," nor fulfil its spiritual purpose in carrying the power of the Gospel of Christ to the world? "Prodigious!"

By all means have bishops at the head of the Church if the Church be so minded: it is not the "historic episcopate" that is under discussion here; but why make it essential to the very being of a Church and to the distribution of the divine blessing? Has God bound Himself down to that one "idea," and can He work through no other? What is the reason for this insistence on bishops?

It is the priestly, sacramentarian theory that the virtue of the sacraments can only be conveyed through an unbroken line of prelates, whom it must therefore be possible to identify. At the heart of all lies the notion that the grace received

The
Historic
Episco-
pate

The People and the Priest

Priest- hood

in the sacraments must come down along a continuous line or order of consecrated priests. It is the claim of priestly functions that makes the Roman and the Anglican Catholics fight so strenuously for the unbroken succession of a priestly order from the Apostles. It is to arrogate special functions or powers over souls.

The powers of the priest, which it is sought thus to infallibly secure, are dealt with in another chapter.

Mechan- ism or Spirit?

Now, is there not something mechanical in this conception of the way in which grace descends to modern souls? Is it not a mechanical idea that grace must pass along a certain wire, along a succession of priestly hands and heads? Is it consistent with Christian conceptions in the New Testament to say that Christ's grace is to be confined to a fixed order of men bearing a certain official brand? Is Christ's free Spirit restricted to a certain mechanical and official channel?

The purpose of His whole teaching was to break down religious officialism, to destroy artificial limitations to grace, to abolish privileged orders of men, and make His blessings direct gifts to all souls willing to receive them.

With Christ's own authoritative teaching full in sight, one cannot conceive of His spiritual blessings passing down through confined channels that are the monopoly of a few—cannot conceive Him

Successors to the Apostles

making His spiritual life dependent upon a certain form of ecclesiastical organisation. It offends all one's sense of spiritual fitness in Christianity to think of a long succession of hands laid on heads, like a telegraph line, transmitting saving grace and keeping such grace within that line alone. It debases the Christian conception of spiritual grace, confines, externalises, degrades it.

Grace does not pass along ordaining fingers, nor is it the property of a single "order" of men. The links of connection are too physical and external to be conductors for the transmission of spiritual grace. Surely our brethren of the Catholic Churches do not realise what a daring act of presumption it looks, to claim that the Holy Spirit is under keeping of a caste, and that members of that caste can control, command, impart, withhold His operations. Very different was Christ's own teaching: "He (the Spirit) bloweth where He listeth."

It is quite a mistake to imagine divine grace requiring to pass down a conveying conduit from long past ages. The divine life is over and around men *to-day*. Grace has not had to travel down the conduit of centuries into our lives, but comes fresh and direct from the living Spirit to the spiritual mind, new every day. Is grace a mystic something that plays about the persons of priests? Is it a sort of spiritual electricity that waits their

The Con-
ducting
Wire

From
Spirit to
spirit

The People and the Priest

commands? The passage of grace is from spirit to spirit.

The Succession of Influence

If there has been any Apostolic Succession, it has been the succession of Christian influence, the transmission of truth and holy impulses from one devout soul to another. It resides not in any order of men. It may be communicated by priests, bishops, and popes, if they are spiritual-minded. But it is as free to travel by high-souled laymen—by George Fox, Erskine of Linlathen, General Gordon, Christina Rossetti. The sensitive and sympathetic soul open to Christ's Spirit is the divine conductor of grace. Wherever a receptive soul is met, whether in Catholic Cathedral or Quaker Meeting-House, there the transmission of Christ's grace may be felt and proved. The action of spiritual grace is not bound but free.

A Question of "Barlow and Parker"

One cannot but feel how paltry and humiliating is the spectacle of men fighting over the validity of one link here and another link there in the long chain of popes and bishops running through the centuries. Pitched battles have been, and still are, fought between Roman and Anglican Catholics over Archbishop Parker in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Was he ever consecrated at all? If so, was it not a mock consecration, by men who had not themselves received the right consecration? Was Barlow, who laid his hands on Parker, really in the Apostolic line? Barlow's

Successors to the Apostles

name does not occur in the register of bishops at Lambeth. But there were two others besides Barlow, it is said in reply, assisting in Parker's consecration, and through them, if not through him, the grace would pass, and so the situation would be saved, and all would be right! That divine grace does pass from heart to heart among Catholics, as among other Christians, I not merely allow, but gladly contend. But not because of such an entry in a register and "narrow escape."

"How, then, could it descend?" Were there no Spirit-filled people ministering the Gospel, instructing and influencing others, who, receiving the truth and the power of it by the Spirit in direct touch with their hearts, did like work for others to follow? By that spiritual means it could and *did* descend immediately from above as well as from before.

A layman is allowed to baptise a dying child, if no priest be available at the critical hour. The supposed regenerating grace of the Sacrament is thus dispensed by one *not* in the Apostolic Succession, and thus, as occurred in strict Calvinism,¹ it is the case of a little child that breaks through the hard theory of limitation to grace.

¹ Under the Hyper-Calvinistic theory of election, what became of the "non-elect" who died in infancy? Were they doomed? Inconceivable! Hence the breach opened in the walls of the theory.

The People and the Priest

Fancy the question of the validity of a Church depending on the entry of a name in a Lambeth register! Fancy the succession of grace hanging tremulously on the dispute about what took place at a certain moment when Barlow laid his hands on Parker! Can Christ's Sacraments and their spiritual virtue be dependent on a technicality like this? How puerile and mechanical to suspend the heritage of Christianity upon a thread of this sort! Not thus did Christ present Christianity.

Wicked
Mengood
Con-
ductors

The descent of grace appears a still more mechanical thing, when we learn that, according to the Catholic view, grace is passed on by wicked men. Bishops and Popes may be, as some have admittedly been, vicious sensualists or hypocritical unbelievers. Yet neither their vice nor their unbelief could intercept the flow of saving grace through their agency. The grace ignored their personal character and passed along their official functions. A strangely irrational and artificial thing must grace be. It is not even so particular and discriminating as the electric current, which requires a certain sympathetic medium for its passage. But spiritual grace was apparently transmitted, indeed *must* pass, through bad men as efficaciously as through good men. It is quite independent of moral or immoral character, of spiritual or unspiritual minds. Any man will do for a medium if only certain hands have been

Successors to the Apostles

laid on his head, and certain words uttered over him! He will do for a link in the great chain of succession if properly joined to the previous link, even if that link be one of clay. All this is a travesty and degradation of the Christian and Apostolic conception of grace.

If the Roman Catholic Church is, within measure, the heir of Christ, it is the heir *also* in some measure of the world-spirit (*Welt-Geist*). It is the heir to the Roman Imperial system. It is a great secular Temporal Power, a religious Cæsarism with its Chief at Rome, the equivalent of the *divus* Augustus. It has the equivalents of the Imperial Court and of the machinery of delegated administration. So gigantic and overwhelming did the Cæsarism of Roman Imperialism become in such rulers as Nero that it stood forth as one at least of the Anti-Christ. This culmination of the World-Power was to come again and again at different periods of history; there were to be many Anti-Christ. And, without venturing to say whether or not any Church has ever become an Anti-Christ, one Church did certainly centralise in itself very much of the Cæsarism and World-Power of Rome. Not without significance is the name—Roman—which that Church claims. It is in the succession of Imperial Rome in its organisation quite as much as it is in the succession of the Apostles in its net religion.

The
"Welt-
Geist"

Succes-
sor to the
Cæsars

The People and the Priest

Pagan
Succession

In many other respects the Catholic system is in a Pagan as well as in an Apostolic Succession. Professor Müller of Breslau, in a recent work on the early history of the Church, says: "Heathenism, when it found no longer a place in the empire, took refuge in the Church. History shows how the polytheistic craze was made by mariolatry and angelolatry and saint-worship; how the Church festivals were heathen festivals slightly disguised; how the ceremonial ablutions, the use of incense, the lighting of candles, and votive offerings characteristic of heathen worship reappeared with fresh significance in Christian temples."

Charles
Reade's
*Cloister
and the
Hearth*

Charles Reade has thus good support from historical scholarship for much of what he says in *The Cloister and the Hearth* through the lips of Colonna (chapter lxxiv.).

"The Greek and Roman vulgar were polytheists; and what are ours? We have not invented 'invocation of the saints.' Our Sancti answer to their Dæmones and Divi, and the heathen used to pray their Divi or deified mortals to intercede with the higher divinity; but the ruder minds among them, incapable of nice distinctions, worshipped those lesser gods they should have but invoked. And so do the mob of Christians in our day, following the heathen vulgar by unbroken tradition. For in Holy Writ is no polytheism of any sort or kind. . . .

Successors to the Apostles

“Among the ancient vulgar only the mariners were monotheists ; they worshipped Venus, called her ‘Stella Maris,’ and ‘Regina Cœlorum.’ Among our vulgar only the mariners are monotheists ; they worship the Virgin Mary, and call her the ‘Star of the Sea,’ and the ‘Queen of Heaven.’ Call you theirs a new religion? An old doublet with a new button.

Venus
and the
Virgin

“Our vulgar make images and adore [?] them, which is absurd ; for adoration is the homage due from a creature to its creator ; now here man is the creator ; so the statues ought to worship him, and would, if they had brains enough to justify a rat worshipping *them*. But even this abuse, though childish enough to be modern, is ancient. The Pagan vulgar made their images, then knelt before them, adorned them with flowers, offered incense to them, lighted tapers before them, carried them in procession, and made pilgrimages to them, just to the smallest tittle as we their imitators do. . . .

Images

“The Trojans had Oriental imaginations, and feigned that their Palladium, a wooden statue three cubits long, fell down from heaven. The Greeks took this fib home among the spoils of Troy, and soon it rained statues on all the Grecian cities and their Latin apes. . . . We owe all our Palladiuncula, and all our speaking, nodding, winking, sweating, bleeding statues, to these poor

The
Palla-
dium of
Troy

The People and the Priest

abused heathen. The Athenian statues all sweated before the battle of Chæronea ; so did the Roman statues during Tully's consulship. . . .

The Toe
of the
Pontifex
Maximus

“Kissing of images and the Pope's (Peter's) toe is Eastern Paganism. The Egyptians had it of the Assyrians, the Greeks of the Egyptians, the Romans of the Greeks, and we of the Romans, whose Pontifex Maximus had his toe kissed under the empire. Tully tells us of a fair image of Hercules at Agrigentum, whose chin was worn by kissing. The lower parts of the statue we call Peter are Jupiter. The toe is sore worn, but not all by Christian mouths. The heathen vulgar laid their lips there first for many a year, and ours have but followed them. . . .

Holy
Water

“Our incense is Oriental, Roman, Pagan ; and the early Fathers of the Church regarded it with superstitious horror, and died for refusing to handle it. Our holy water is Pagan, and all its uses. See, here is a Pagan aspersorium. Could you tell it from one of ours? It stood in the same part of their temples, and was used in ordinary worship as ours, and in extraordinary purifications. They called it Aqua lustralis. Their vulgar, like ours, thought drops of it falling on the body would wash out sin ; and their men of sense, like ours, smiled or sighed at such credulity. . . .

“We celebrate the miraculous Conception of the Virgin on the 2nd of February ; the Romans

Successors to the Apostles

celebrated the miraculous Conception of Juno on the 2nd of February. Our Feast of All Saints is on the 2nd of November; the Festum Dei Mortis was on the 2nd of November. Our Candlemas is also an old Roman feast; neither the date nor the ceremony altered one tittle. The Patrician ladies carried candles about the city that night as our signoras do now. . . . Did we discover Purgatory? On the contrary, all we really know about it is from two treatises of Plato, the *Gorgias* and the *Phædo*, and from the sixth book of Virgil's *Æneid*. **Feasts, Candles, and Purgatory**

"Our numerous altars in one church are heathen: the Jews, who are monotheists, have but one altar in a church; but the Pagans had many, being polytheists. In the temple of Paphian Venus were a hundred of them. . . . Our altars and our hundred lights around St Peter's tomb are Pagan. 'Centum aras posuit vigilemque sacraverat ignem.' We invent nothing, not even numerically. **Altars**

"Our very devil is the god Pan, horns and hoofs and all, but blackened. . . . Our Moses hath stolen the horns of Ammon. . . . And Janus bore the keys of heaven before St Peter.

"All our really old Italian bronzes of the Virgin and Child are Venuses and Cupids. . . . What habit is lovelier than the vestments of our priests? Well, we owe them all to Numa Pompilius, except **Vestments**

The People and the Priest

the girdle and the stole, which are Judaical. As for the amice and the albe, they retain the very names they bore in Numa's day."

If the justification be that it is wise and right to banish Paganism by taking over Pagan customs and objects of reverence and consecrating them to Christian use—and there may be *partial* excuse for such action if well restrained—let it be clearly observed at any rate that these practices and sacred objects of Catholicism are not a heritage of Christianity but are received from Pagan sources, and therefore are not either authoritative or vital to a Church.

IV

The Safer Way

ONE attraction of the Roman and Anglo-Catholic Church, not already mentioned, is the bold promise of absolute safety for the soul of the true Catholic, the assurance of infallible salvation.

Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic teachers declare that only within their fold is there security, that except by means of their sacraments and through their priestly ministrations there is no certainty of salvation. This they proclaim with ceaseless persistence, and with the solemn innuendo of dread doom for all who hold aloof. The very boldness of the claim overawes, overmasters some reverent minds, striking fear into their hearts.

"The Catholic way is the *safe* way," it is said. "Protestants admit that a devout man may be a Roman Catholic and be saved. Catholics declare that even a devout man, if a Protestant, can be sure of no salvation," unless in the case of "invincible ignorance"—and as so few in this

The
Safe
Church

The People and the Priest

land are in "invincible ignorance" of the Catholic religion, they have no right to expect aught but an eternal doom. "Would it not be at least *safer*, in that case, to be in the true fold?"

If the mercies of God are in any measure extended to those outside the true "fold," they are, it is said, the "uncovenanted mercies" and cannot be relied on.

Outside
the Pale

The same sentiment is entertained by High Anglicans, whose most popular manual, *The Catholic Religion*, says, "there can be no safety outside the Church." Gace's widely-scattered and entertaining "Catechism" says, that "those outside the Catholic fold are out of the pale of salvation, so far as God has thought fit to reveal;" that "they worship God according to their own evil and corrupt imaginations, and therefore their worship is idolatrous;" that for their teachers "it must be sinful and presumptuous to address the throne of grace, usurping the priestly office." This is not confined to books. I know of young people in Anglo-Catholic churches in my own parish who are taught to say, and do say, the same thing about even their close friends who are outside "the Ark of Safety."

Such is the way in which pressure is often brought to bear on the timid soul.

But, even on its own principles, is the "Catholic Church" so sure and safe as it claims to be?

The Safer Way

Other questions that affect the case must be discussed in later chapters; but here must be introduced a matter, of which most Catholics are ignorant, which proves the Roman Catholic Church to be entirely unable to assure the devout soul of positive safety.

I refer to the doctrine of Intention¹—a doctrine which has very wisely been kept concealed from Catholics in general but which is authoritative and binding, having been decreed by the Pope and Church of Rome at the Council of Trent.

The
Doctrine
of "In-
tention"

According to the doctrine, "it is necessary that the Bishop or Priest who performs any religious ceremony should inwardly mean to do what the Church intends to be done by that ceremony." If his mind is not directly intending, consciously purposing, to convey grace at the time of the sacrament or ceremony, the act is null and void and there is no virtue in it, and no grace is conveyed or received. In the administration of the sacraments or in the consecration of bishops and priests, if the person officiating do not make the sacred intention which is supposed to be made in the act, if he have not his mind in sympathy with his act, that sacrament or consecration communicates no grace.

How should this doctrine be of so much consequence? Because the salvation of the Catholic

¹ Not the *Jesuit* doctrine of Intention.

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The
Chain of
the Ages

depends upon receiving the grace of the sacraments from true priests of the "One True Church" in unbroken succession from Peter or the Apostles ; and if there has been one false or broken link in the chain of succession through eighteen hundred years, all the later acts and ceremonies attached thereto, all that afterwards depend on that false link, are rendered vain, void, without power to save or to convey grace.

Now it is a notorious fact, admitted sorrowfully by Catholics, that there have been *some* vicious, corrupt, and wicked Popes and Bishops. It is a painful fact that, during the Renaissance in Italy, "the higher clergy were widely infidel, that in Spain they were often secretly Jews." Back in the darker centuries there were Popes, bishops, priests, of flagrantly debased life and sordid mind. Now if among all these there were any who, during the act of consecration, absolution, or ordination, did not make the true sacred intention implied in the act, all that ever after hung upon that false act was void, invalid, a deception.

Links of
Clay

If any old Pope had an infidel heart, if, through a bad life, or a callous, careless habit, or a Sadducean spirit of unbelief, he failed to make a true spiritual intention, none of the bishops he ordained were real bishops, none of the priests they ordained were real priests, none of the people they baptized or absolved or granted the Communion received

The Safer Way

any saving grace—none of all the acts performed by those who were consecrated by the said Pope or bishops, none of the subsequent bishops, priests, sacraments, priestly acts that followed in that line, were worth anything. Said Medina, speaking on behalf of the Church: "The intention of the minister is always hid from us, without which we cannot know there is a sacrament."

No one in the Roman Church can be *sure* of salvation, since no one can possibly have any certainty that those from whom the grace is supposed to descend had the true intention. ^{No certainty} Even if he be convinced and assured of a right state of mind in the individual priest who is dispensing the grace of the sacraments to him, he cannot by any manner of means be sure that all the vast succession of priestly or episcopal acts, reaching from Peter down to the present hour, were valid and genuine. He cannot know, and if he investigates the condition of the Church and the majority of priests during past periods of corruption he can scarcely even believe, that there was never any unbelief, ignorance, negligence, or other cause of failure in priestly acts on which he relies.

I should be sorry to depend for my assurance of forgiveness, or for my ordination or my marriage tie, upon a myriad successive acts of a myriad celebrants back through centuries in which, at

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A Car-
dinal's
Dis-
avowal

points, scepticism, corruption, and darkness unhappily had their victims within the priesthood.

Cardinal Bellarmine, one of the most distinguished and trusted among Roman Catholic theologians, declared: "No one can be certain that he receives a true sacrament, since a sacrament cannot be celebrated without the minister's intention, and no one can see the intention of another." It is a fatal doctrine, fatal to the whole theory of the descent of grace, absolutely destructive of all certainty.

It is not "the safer way," for the very foundation of the way is admittedly left in uncertainty and suspicion. Little wonder that the doubt which runs through the whole system is withheld from the knowledge of Catholics. And no wonder that Jesuit casuists have, with their subtle, deceptive distinctions, striven to refine away the doctrine, or clouded it with confusion.

V

The One Holy Catholic Church

IS there one true Church and no other? Three of the four "Notes of the Church" are that she is One, Holy and Catholic. Is there, then, one ecclesiastical organism to which Jesus Christ has committed the monopoly of His saving grace, and are all other claimants to the Christian heritage nothing better than usurpers and bastards? When this claim is made, as it is, persistently and unflinchingly, it becomes a powerful instrument for constraining devout people to enter what is declared to be the one true Apostolic fold.

If the General Medical Council is entitled to assert its supremacy as the One Body that registers qualified medical men and authorises them to practise, why should there not be a similar single Supreme Authority over the One Christian Church? If, indeed, Catholics claimed no more in religion than the General Medical Council claims in medicine—namely, that they are the organisation that regulates the Christian ministry—the claim would be less absolute and exclusive,

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although, we should still unhesitatingly make the just counter-claim that there are other Christian organisations as fully authenticated and authorised by the great Head of the Church as the "Catholic" Church. But the General Medical Council does not declare that no medicine and no medical treatment is effective unless administered by its members. Its only object is to secure practitioners who have the proper skill in the cure of disease. Each Church seeks, or should seek, to do no more. Every servant of Christ who has the skill to diagnose moral and spiritual disease and to apply the truths of Christ that heal the heart is not only entitled to do so, but is justified by the proven fact that thousands of hearts are thus healed and thousands of lives made strong and nobly Christ-like.

But the Roman and Anglo-Catholic Churches claim each that it is the sole depository of spiritual grace and can alone apply the sacraments effectively to the souls of men.

**The Only
Genuine**

It might strike the stranger that for any single community of Christians to claim to be *the* only body of Christ and to have a monopoly of grace is something very like bluff, a bold attempt to foreclose the question and disarm opposition by a vociferous and persistent assertion of being the "only genuine and original company." The claim must be proved beyond question, or else it is a fine piece of egotism and presumption.

The One Holy Catholic Church

Each Church may naturally think that it approaches most nearly to the original Church of the days of the Apostles. Each may think so without any intention of unchurching others. But that one among the Churches should pronounce itself to be the only genuine Church of Christ and all others to be false imitators has, on the face of it, an amazing look of arrogance and self-assertion, which tempts the impartial observer to turn away with a cynical smile. When all believe in the same Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the same revelation, the same moral and spiritual principles, when all draw salvation ultimately from the same source in Jesus Christ, it appears incredible, not that one should believe itself to be nearer the truth than the others, but that one ecclesiastical corporation should claim to be the *only true* Church, and all others to be pretenders, outside the covenanted mercies of God.

Somehow this claim sounds strangely in ears that have heard our Lord Jesus Christ Himself say: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

When the Church of Rome avers that it is the One Church, it has this much in its favour, that it appears solidly one, an organic whole, complete in itself. But it has suffered from schisms within itself more than any other Church. In a thousand years there were thirty-nine Anti-Popes leading

Rival
Pontiffs

The People and the Priest

great splits, and often one claimant to the Pontificate thrust out the others according as he had "the larger armies, or the longer purse."

"Where," Protestants are asked, "was your Church before the Reformation?" "Where your own was," Protestants might reply; "corrupt and overladen with accumulated superstitions and excrescences." But rather, it may be asked, "Where was yours, with its added rites, orders, and new dogmas, in the New Testament times?"

**Who are
Schis-
matics?**

Which are the true schismatics—those who keep outside the pale of the Catholic organisation, or those who have added dogma after dogma, ceremony after ceremony, to the religion of Jesus and His Apostles? Who are the real schismatics if not those who have departed from Christianity as it was when first founded, who have imposed Ritual, Masses, Virgin-worship, Confessionals, &c., on the simplicity of Christ's Gospel, who have taken over the Imperial Government of Pagan Rome and fitted Christianity to its autocratic rule? Is it a sin to depart from that which has departed from its own foundation in the New Testament and to return to that original?

**The
Three-
Branch
Theory**

Can the Anglo-Catholics—whom the Roman Church regards as pretenders, and the validity of whose orders it disallows—make out as good a case as the Roman to be the One Church? They sadly grant that it is split into three sections

The One Holy Catholic Church

—their own the purest, the heretical Eastern or Greek Church, and the Papal. If visible organisation be indispensable, it is not a single organism. "There are the three branches of the One Vine." But why only three? Why should the other Christian Churches not be branches also? "There can be no Church without bishops." But, as the most learned Episcopal authorities declare, and as has been certified in another chapter, there were no bishops in the modern sense, as distinct from ministers of congregations, in the Primitive Church of the first century.

"The three branches, alone, have the same faith and the same sacraments." Not the same faith; for the Roman Church imposes two points of faith as necessary to salvation, which the Anglo-Catholic Church rejects, namely, the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and the Infallibility of the Pope when pronouncing *ex cathedrâ* upon matters of faith. The Roman Church also regards the Greek as heretical on a vital point of faith—the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son (filioque). "There is no doubt," says the Anglo-Catholic manual already quoted, "a good deal of diversity on certain points, not so much touching the main doctrines of the Creed, *e.g.* the doctrines of the Atonement or the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, as on matters of practice." But the same main doctrines of the Creed are

"Mis-believing Churches"

The People and the Priest

“One
Body”

held by other Christian Churches, who are One with them and each other, not only in the observance of the “Greater Sacraments,” but in accepting the same fundamentals of the faith. “But the ‘misbelieving Churches’¹ do not view the sacraments in the same light.” No more do the Low and Broad Churchmen in the Anglican Church, within which are differences, under the same roof, as wide as those between different Churches. “We see that in the Apostles’ times,” continues the above volume, “there was a good deal of disagreement, and that upon important points.” Yes, then as now: “I of Peter and I of Paul.” “But ‘there is one body’.” No, if by body be understood Church organism, there is not One to-day, but a number. The only One that exists is the Body of Christian believers ranked under different denominational titles, “one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;” and all hold in spirit “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” All who accept the faith and life of Christ as shown in the New Testament form that One Body.

Dr Pusey
on “The
Soul of
the
Church”

Dr Pusey has a striking and precious passage bearing on this strife, giving away the whole case.

“They are members of the *soul* of the Church, who, not being members of the visible Communion

¹ Gace’s *Catechism*.

The One Holy Catholic Church

and society, know not that in not becoming members of it they are rejecting the command of Christ, to whom by faith and love and in obedience they cleave. And they, being members of the *body* or visible Communion of the Church, are not members of the *soul* of the Church who, amid outward profession of the faith, do, in heart or deeds, deny Him whom in words they confess." If the latter may be members of the organised "Catholic" body without being members of the *soul* of the Church, in spite of the sacraments supposed to be made effective by the priest, then it is the *soul* of the Church that is the One True Church. Then am I content to belong to the *soul* of the Church, for that union alone is allowed to be *vital*.

It appears scarcely fitting that Anglo-Catholics should so cavalierly exclude all other Christian communities, when they themselves are excluded, their "orders" declared invalid, their sacraments consequently vain and inefficient, by the vastly larger Roman Church. Anglo-Catholics may approach as near as possible to Roman doctrine and ceremonial: they are even then regarded by the Roman Church as not less heretics and schismatics than full-blown Protestants.

You, we might say to High Anglo-Catholics, "Tu broke away from the One organised Church at the Reformation. "We only broke with the Papacy

The
Exclusive
Excluded

"Tu
Quoque"

The People and the Priest

and its corruptions." Yet you cut yourselves off from the historic Church of centuries, and set up a separate organisation of your own. "But ours is the same as the early British Church, which had a direct descent from the Apostles and was independent of Rome." Yet you derive your succession *through* the Roman Church in the middle ages, while declaring it corrupt and repudiating its authority. You break away from the ecclesiastical unity, and go back to the early and purer Church. It is exactly what *we* also do—repudiate and break away from the corrupt ecclesiastical organisation of an intervening age, and go back to the Primitive Church—only we go farther back and claim to be One with the Church as seen in its purity in the New Testament. If you have not un-churched yourselves by breaking away from the one organisation, no more have we, who rely on the same original authorities and hold as strong a Church idea.

Christ's Verdict

Where, then, is the true Church of Christ to be found? Christ Himself is the final authority upon this question, and He declares: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Wherever Christ is the centre round whom even the smallest gathering of Christian disciples assembles in His name, there is His Presence. And where He is, there the Church is. As in Imperial Rome it used to be

The One Holy Catholic Church

said, "Where the Emperor is, there Rome is," it may be said with no less truth, "Where Christ is, there the Church is"—a branchlet of it.

The true Church of Christ, whilst rightly marshalled in orderly organisations, overpasses and transcends them, and includes "all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth." It is in a literal and world-wide sense a "Catholic" Church.

To be "Catholic" is another "Note of the Catholic Church." But remove the capital letter, which ^{or} catholic? begs the question by associating it with the Church that assumes the name Catholic. Is the Roman Church truly catholic? It is *Roman*, Papal, and exclusive of half of Christendom, not rounded, universal.

Are Anglo-Catholics altogether catholic? They, too, are sectional (literally, sects), exclusive, representing but one (certainly a majestic) type of religion, order, and worship. The Bidding Prayer has the true catholic outlook: "Let us pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world." The Canon proceeds to say: "especially for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland." The Episcopal Church in Scotland was not revived at the date of the Canon (1610), and the Church referred to, therefore, was *Presbyterian*—a mark of wider

The
Bidding
Prayer

The People and the Priest

catholicity than appears at present among Anglo-Catholics.

Confor-
mity

What is Conformity in one country is Non-conformity in some other country. The vast Eastern Church and the Roman Church dissent from each other. The National Church of England is the Great Dissenter of the West—dissenter from Rome. If Presbyterians are dissenters in England, Episcopalians are dissenters in Presbyterian Scotland, and Romanists are dissenters in both.

Everyone must deplore the multiplicity of Christian denominations, the tendency to split off upon minor matters. Dissent is no more divine in itself than a State Church is divine in itself. Yet, although the disposition to set up a new Church for every distinct idea be deplorable, all the scattered communities of Christians are parts of the great Spiritual “Body” of Jesus Christ.

Forms of worship, creeds, organisation may be *more* or *less* scriptural, more or less wise; but nothing is absolutely vital to a Church, save that the members be gathered in His name and have His Spirit's Presence.

The
Great
Vine

Outward unity appears a glorious idea. But what is the true, ideal, practicable unity? Not uniformity in organisation and worship. Such is an impossibility so long as men have different tastes and types of mind. The branches of the

The One Holy Catholic Church

vine are not uniform, but vary in shape and in productiveness. Yet there is a great unity binding all Christian Churches together. There is the common stem of the Great Vine, the same nourishing sap of love and life flowing to every limb, branch, twig, and shoot. All are bound in a great unity of Christian life.

Wherever Christian life, the Christ-spirit, and Christian power are found, *there* is a branch belonging to the Vine Christ.

To be "Holy" is another "Note of the Church." The Holy men and women there have been, we make haste to say with delight, in both "Catholic" Churches—but in them no more than in other Christian Churches. Look at the Church of England as a whole, at its heroic workers, its sweet saints, gentle spirits, and noble leaders—whom all Christians honour—and at the worldly-minded, lax, overbearing clergy and the frivolous, indifferent, loose members to be found in numbers in it (to the sorrow of its best men and of all Christian people), and then say whether it is either more or less holy than any other Christian Church in the land. It and these—not to make ungracious comparisons — are alike of mixed character. It shows the Note of "Holiness" no more than the others.

The Roman Catholic Church has had its saints and heroes, and, *laus Deo*, has them still. But

The
"Holy"
Church

Anglican?

Roman?

The People and the Priest

during long ages it lost this mark of the true Church most lamentably. Its idea of holiness has been monastic, official devotedness rather than moral and spiritual character. Its moral corruption, its vices and proud worldliness (read Dante) made it stink in the nostrils of the good. And to-day the number of Roman Catholic criminals in reformatories and prisons is out of all proportion greater—in some places 20, in others 50 or even 100 per cent. higher—than what we find outside the so-called holy Church. (See, also, next chapter.)

No, this Note of Holiness is not distinctive of Catholics. All moral and social tests disprove their claims to pre-eminence.

The true Church is the universal society of Christians. It is the brotherhood of faith, and love, and holy living. It is the society of Christian goodness.

VI

The Appeal to Character

THERE is one test of truth available by which we may all judge the claims of the One Church and the special efficacy of her sacraments and the powers of her priests. It is the character which they produce in comparison with the character of Christians who are outside the pale.

The *truest* Church, I would say, is that which produces the best men, or that which creates the character and life most signally filled with the true mind and spirit and power of Christ.

Has any single Church a monopoly of the production of good men, of Christly character and life? From the east and from the west they come and sit down in the Kingdom with Christ: St Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth Fry; Newman and Kingsley, foes in controversy, but alike lofty in aim and life; Shaftesbury and Booth; all saints drawn from all Christian communities. If good fruit of character and life has come from the various branches of the Church, is there not irrefutable proof of their connection with the living vine? Can a discon-

The Fruit
of Grace

The People and the Priest

nected branch, broken off from the stem, continue to bear fruit? Christ says No. Then test the validity of the various Churches by their fruits.

“The
Signs
of 
Apostle”

When told that those in the line of Apostolic Succession possess the unalloyed, effectual grace which saves and feeds the soul, we turn and ask, What is this, then, that Bunyan and Livingstone, Spurgeon and Chalmers, possess? Is it not genuine grace which is seen beautifying and ennobling their lives? Whence their lofty Christian character? What was it in them that made them so mighty in leading bad men to become good, and drawing hearts to Christ? How were such men able to do such Christlike work in rescuing large numbers of orphaned children and poor strugglers? They had the “signs of an apostle in mighty deeds.” It is not enough to invent a theory to account for a few exceptions. These men are no slight exception, but are outstanding representatives of a vast army of Christians as pure, unselfish, and consecrated as Catholic brethren; and in a true theory of grace and of the Christian Church their character must be accounted for.

Gace's
Cate-
chism

Mr Gace's *Catechism* for the children asks and answers: “Do we not find among them [Protestants] many good men? *Ans.*—Many, doubtless, are unexceptionable characters in a moral point of view, but they are not *holy* men; and herein, indeed, we may learn a lesson from them, for, if

The Appeal to Character

they apparently attain such perfection, what ought we to be in all manner of godly conversation, who possess all the means of grace?" (What, indeed!)

"Wherein consists the difference between a moral man and a holy man? *Ans.*—A moral man is one who acts from the impulses of education, position in society, and other worldly principles; a holy man is one who does good works by the Divine aid of the Holy Ghost, duly using the means."

Any theory of the Church, sacraments, priests, and the descent of Apostolic grace and power which leads to such a view as this stands self-condemned. To deny the presence of the Holy Ghost in such men as Carey, Moffat, John Woolman, Norman Macleod, is to come perilously near committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. It was in this fashion and spirit that the Jews said Christ had a devil.

What can "Catholic" Churches show that is, **Holier than others?** at any rate, better and more Christly than the lives and labours of such men as these outside the "Catholic" fold? If one sees, without the "Catholic" pale, characters as gracious and holy, lives as noble, philanthropy as active, ministries as powerful, with as much of Apostolic spirit, and evidently attested by the signs that follow believers, as one sees inside the Catholic Church, is not an impartial observer entitled and compelled to conclude that the "grace" of Christ is with *all* Chris-

The People and the Priest

tian Churches and is the monopoly of none? If any Church has the true and only Apostolic Succession, let it prove its claim by shewing the unique, special, and unrivalled fruits which these powers ought to produce.

The true Successors of the Apostles are those who are most filled with Apostolic faith, most animated with Apostolic zeal and love, most in harmony with the Apostolic Gospel and the Apostolic spirit.

Baptis-
mal Re-
genera-
tion

Test the truth of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration by its evidences in character.

“The effect of baptism is threefold: It remits all sin, original and actual. It bestows sanctifying grace. It makes the recipient a member of Christ, the child of God, etc.”¹ But observe the children who have been baptised by Catholic and Anglo-Catholic priests. Are they better in school and life than their fellows who were baptised by Irregulars? Are they visibly regenerate? Has an outward act been the means of effecting a radical change in the unconscious infant? “How can we judge what is a secret process?” By its effects on life and character. To call it regeneration when it produces no distinctive results afterwards in superior character, to say that it sanctifies when it does not keep the subject free from the sins of average man, to say that it makes all baptised

Its
Effects

¹ *The Catholic Religion*, p. 260.

The Appeal to Character

ones the children of God when many of them turn out to be children of the devil or of the world, is to play fast and loose, not only with facts of life, but with the most sacred and solemn realities of the moral and spiritual kingdom.

To suppose, further, that a little unconscious babe that knows neither good nor ill, if it dies unbaptised, has no place in God's covenanted mercies and goes down into the gloomy limbo, while if it had only been baptised it would have soared into supernal light, is to accept the very anarchy of unreason and immorality. Such a determination of destiny is not based on any moral principle but on a *chance* of infantile life and on an outward technicality; and if *you* were guilty of such conduct to your children you would blush for utter shame. Yet it is piously ascribed to God! And all in the name of an ecclesiastical *theory* of priestly, sacramentarian grace, which, even if an admissible, is not the *inevitable* interpretation of the revelation in Christ. Should not such appalling issues of the sacerdotal theory serve to shock the Catholic into some doubt about the validity of his interpretation?

"But you are a Rationalist, and this is a mystery." Then you are an Irrationalist—which is worse; and, while there must be mystery in the relation of Spirit with spirit, a Christian mystery, though it transcends comprehension, must

Limbo of
Unbap-
tised
Infants

Ration-
alist?

The People and the Priest

not *contradict* reason and the best instincts Christ has implanted in us. And *this* mystery is of your own making. Baptism is a *symbol*, not *magic*.

Com-
munion

In the Sacrament of Communion does the bread require to be consecrated by priestly hands in order that grace may be received by the communicant? Test it in experience. It is possible to look round and see whether those who receive Communion from a priest are more grace-filled, more Christly, more lofty and moral in character than other Christians. "Grace" will show itself in character; else what is "grace"? Taking a thousand average Catholics and a thousand average members of the Reformed Churches, do the lives and characters of the latter prove that they lack a mystic something, a Christly spirituality, which the Catholics possess? Certainly Catholic nations do not excel the others in morality or godliness or any of the signs of grace. If the life-fruit of the unconsecrated tree be as rich and full as the fruit of the consecrated, it would appear that the flow of spiritual sap does not depend upon priestly consecration. For, on the authority of the Highest, "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing."

Tested
by Ex-
perience

The Spirit of Christ, like the sun in the sky, ignores all walls of partition, and develops good fruit in every garden that is cultivated and lies open to the heavens.

The Appeal to Character

The last word in this contest is spoken by good **Verdict**
lives. The best way of proving ourselves part of **of Good**
the living and true Church of Christ is by living **Lives**
true, Christly lives, and by producing good fruit;
by meeting "in His name"; by cherishing
affection for all the Christian Brotherhood; and
by including within the Church and within our
charity even those who would exclude us.

VII

The Appeal to Authority : Spiritual Experts

THERE must be some authority, it is said, which is entitled to declare what is the authentic Christian faith and the proper Church order. To let every man interpret the Bible for himself would be to let individualism run mad, and to open the door for all manner of heresies and divisions.

What
Author-
ity?

Well then, what shall the authority be? The Pope Infallible when pronouncing *ex cathedra* upon faith and morals, say Roman Catholics. The teaching and practice of "the ancient and undivided Church," say Anglo-Catholics. Take the latter first. The disputed points in Anglo-Catholic and Roman Catholic teaching are discussed on their merits in separate chapters.

"The holy Scriptures are the final authority in questions relating to Catholic truth, the Church being the interpreter of those Scriptures, and that, too, in the sense in which the Fathers have generally understood them."¹

¹ *The Catholic Religion*, p. 126.

The Appeal to Authority

The constant appeal of Anglo-Catholics, accordingly, is to St Cyprian, Tertullian, and generally the Church of the third and fourth centuries. But what is there sacred and authoritative about the Church and the teachers of that period in history? Who constituted them arbiters of truth and interpretation? What is St Cyprian to us more than any other great Christian thinker and theologian in any of the centuries up to our own time? Whether he or, say, Luther be right, the one has not inherently any higher claim to dominate our thinking than the other. Is the claim made that the Fathers stood nearer to Apostolic times than we? But so greatly have scholarship and historical research augmented our knowledge of early times that we stand practically as close to the days of Christ as did the Fathers.

Is it that Christian doctrine had developed by that time, that heresies had been condemned, and Church Councils had formulated the truth? But if the authority lie with developed doctrine and practice, then the Roman Church is superior to the Fathers, for it has accumulated the full development of faith through the Christian era. If the Spirit was to guide the Church infallibly in the framing of creeds and order, who can say that He stayed His guiding hand in the times of the Fathers and did not continue His inspiring function till the Council of Trent and does not in our own generation?

The
Church
Fathers

Develop-
ment

The People and the Priest

Development still goes on. Men with the spirit of interpretation are, not adding dogmas, but gaining deeper insight into the spiritual meaning of our Lord's life-message, and this outside the present "Catholic" Church. Why select one particular period and elevate it to a judge's chair, as though decisive authority lingered about it? If we are to hark back to early times, let us go right back to the first age, to the original sources, to the Apostles themselves, and, high over all, to the Founder of the Faith, who is our final authority, to whom we make our appeal. The Apostles do not say that the Scriptures are ineffectual without the Church to interpret them. They are, says St Paul, "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

I am not questioning whether the opinions of the great thinkers or Fathers must carry weight with us—of that let us speak sympathetically forthwith (p. 79); but why choose out arbitrarily one set of them at one point in the Church's history, and not merely give weight to their judgment but accept their authority as decisive?

Unani-
mous
Consent

In the Creed of Pius IV., the Roman Declaration of Faith, occur these words: "I will never receive or interpret the Holy Scriptures except according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." This is what the Anglo-Catholics also

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declare: the unanimous teaching of the Fathers of the undivided Church is the rule of faith.

But the Fathers were very far from being unanimous. Origen and Tertullian and St Augustine widely differed in their reading of Scripture truth, even upon great theological doctrines—differed as widely as Luther from either. If unanimity of teaching be indispensable, then a large part of the Bible cannot be interpreted at all! Never was the Church more deeply rent by religious divisions Early Divisions than in the age of the Fathers, the very time for which unanimous consent is claimed. Moreover, there was much more of unanimous consent in the Mediæval Church, which on this basis ought to be the authoritative Court of Appeal; and under such a test the Roman Catholics have the best of it.

Has the Church never fallen into *unanimous error*, as it certainly fell into general corruption? If general consent be the test of the true faith, then that consent is to be found most perfect in the most degenerate, ignorant, and stagnant periods of Church history.

The Spirit was to guide the Church into all truth: The Organ of the Spirit hence, it is contended, the Church is “the organ of the Spirit,” and must interpret Christ’s teaching—the Church being thus practically superior to the Scriptures. But why should it be supposed that the Spirit ruled the Church’s theology any more infallibly than He ruled its moral character? It is

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certain that He did not guide the organic Church into all holiness ; its *best* men were very fallible, and its moral character at times was flagitious,—a worse evil than any amount of heresy. If the Spirit of Holiness did not make the Church infallibly *holy*, why should the Spirit of Truth be assumed to have made it corporately the oracle of truth?

Appeal to Origins

You appeal to past history: to past history then will we go—to the history written by Apostles and their fellow-disciples. We appeal to the prime sources, to the original authorities, St Paul, St Luke, and their companions (the real “Fathers” of the Christian Church), and, supreme above all, to Christ our sole Lord. All later teaching must submit itself to that test. Whatever proper weight may be attached to the opinions and interpretations of the third century, it must justify itself at the bar of the first authorities. Anglo-Catholics appear to allow this claim, but it is only in name. For it is the Church’s interpretation of the Apostolic Writings that is to be accepted as the only measure of their meaning. If you insist on going back to the Scriptures, you must go only to find there what the Church has told you to find—and you may as well not go at all.

“Par- son” Inter- preter

“It is not for me to read the Bible ; it’s Parson’s duty to tell me what it teaches,” said a very intelligent and well-read Anglo-Catholic layman and friend to me. Indeed all who acknowledge the

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High Anglican priest to-day are expected to bow to an Infallible Church instead of an Infallible Pope; and I know that strict restraints are put upon the free study of the Bible. Is it not a lamentable pass they have come to, and a frank confession of the uncertainty of their Biblical authority, when it is not considered safe for the intelligent laity to go back to the original sources of the Church's faith and practice? When such an embargo is put upon the examination of first-hand authorities, honest men ought to be suspicious that something is wrong and will not bear inspection.

The risks of free individual interpretation are great, but we ought to incur them rather than permit fallible churchmen, on the strength of patristic or mediæval authority, to veil the Scriptures and foreclose inquiry. Whatever divisions in the Church follow from free interpretation of the Bible, they are less hurtful than fettered and stagnant minds and the humiliating consequences which, as history shews, always accompany such mental confinement.

Is not conscience the test of individual duty? Yet one man interprets it in one way, another in another. One good man's conscience sanctions the holding of slaves, another's revolts from it as wicked. In scores of like cases—the use of intoxicants, Sunday sport, theatre-going—there is

Risks of
Liberty
and of
Authority

Who
interprets
Con-
science?

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no unanimity in the verdicts of conscientious judgment. Is it not a deadly danger to the lives and character of men that such diversity of moral judgment and conduct should be permitted? Is it not inconceivable that they should be left without an authorised interpreter of conscience?

The Penalty of Doubt

Such a demand is as reasonable as the demand for an authoritative interpreter of the Scriptures. And if we respect honest differences in points of ethics, why not allow and respect them in points of Scriptural interpretation? If, indeed, every intellectual departure from authorised belief is to be visited with eternal torment, even in spite of Christly character, then men ought to be forbidden to read and even to think—whereupon their mental endowments would be annulled and their lives enslaved to a tyrannous power.

What is "Faith"?

Faith, however, is not credence given unthinkingly to all the creeds imposed, but spiritual attachment to the truth, love, goodness, and grace of Jesus Christ. It is individual thinking, earnest inquiry, the struggle for the truth, that develops our powers, gives us direct insight into the real moral meaning of sacred truths, and makes a faith live. The nations in which such personal freedom of thought and conscience have been most widely used are the nations in which we see the highest social conditions, the greatest freedom

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from crime, and the most distinguished attainments in life's enterprises—as witness England, Scotland, Holland, Germany, the United States, compared with Spain, Italy, and South America. We shall see what is the result of the Appeal to History.

Ancient custom is quoted as the Anglo-Catholic's authority for rites and usages. St Ambrose is appealed to in support of the use of incense, and other saints on behalf of other points of ceremonial. You can generally pick up some Father or other to supply the needful precedent for each rite. May *we* quote the Fathers on this matter? St Cyprian wrote, "Custom without truth is only antiquity of error." Tertullian said, "A custom, beginning from some ignorance or simplicity, hardens into use by continuance, and so is defended against the truth. But our Lord Jesus Christ called Himself the *Truth* and not the *Custom*."

What is it to us that in certain centuries certain "uses," vestments, and rites were in vogue? They may be but Judaism restored, and they have at any rate no intrinsic authority. Christ kept the Lord's Supper in the evening. Yet ancient custom—with the sanction of St Cyprian, who appears to have been the first to "transfer Levitical language to Christian institutions"—has reversed His practice and made *Early Communion* imperative. Just in like fashion may dogmas developed in course of

Authority
of "Custom"

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the centuries be "the antiquity of error" hardened into the "rule of faith."

Tradition A multitude of intricate and encumbering tradition—see the Mishna—had encrusted the Jewish Scriptures, and we know how our Lord swept them away as binding intolerable yokes upon the people's necks. Of like kind are the traditions of the Church, and of as little authority. The Apostles warned Christians to beware of mere "traditions," and enjoined them to hold to "the faith once delivered to the saints." In *that* we, too, find authority; and development that is *addition* is debarred as at least uncertified.

Newman's Development According to the subtle mind of Cardinal Newman, Catholicism is a development, a Spirit-guided development, from germs to be found in Christ and His Apostles. Strange development! Priests, ritual, vestments, masses, confessionals, monasteries, shut Bibles, Infallible Vicars of God, with exclusion or even excommunication of many Christ-loving men who have a different conception of Christianity—are these in harmony with the spirit of Christ's teaching, and His simple, spiritual law of faith and love? It is a reversal of all true development of Christ's religion, a return to the religion of the Jewish temple with Roman Imperialism added. It stands to Christ's own Christianity much as modern Buddhism with its priesthood, caste, and idolatry stands to the pure,

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humanitarian, non-priestly system which the Reformer Sakya-Muni initiated. In view of such "developments," pity the sorrows of the founders of religion !

The Roman Catholic relies on the Infallibility of the Pope when declaring the faith officially as "the organ of the Spirit." Since 1870, when the doctrine was decreed, every Catholic must believe it if he would be saved ; prior to that date he might disbelieve it with impunity, as Catholics generally had done. The Church of Rome, therefore, has power to add to the indispensable terms of salvation. Yet it was the Vatican Council that authoritatively declared, "The Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of St Peter that by His revelation they might make known new doctrines, but that by His assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the deposit of faith handed down by the Apostles."

In 1854 Pope Pius IX. promulgated *ex cathedra* the Immaculate Conception of the B. V. Mary. Such a speculative doctrine is not only unsupported by any statement in Scripture, but is incapable of either proof or disproof. What the promulgation of the doctrine does prove, however, is that Infallibility is a falsehood. Fourteen Popes had repudiated the idea as heresy, and for a thousand years the Church disclaimed it.¹ One Pope pro-

Infallibility

Popes in Conflict

¹ Cf. Pusey's *Letter I.*

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nounces what fourteen Popes had anathematised—and yet all Popes are Infallible when so speaking !

There are numbers of like cases. Arianism was heretical ; Pope Liberius subscribed to it, and published an anathema against St Athanasius as a heretic ; yet it is the creed of Athanasius (?) that has been accepted since his day as the vital doctrine of the Church ! A dogma taught by Pope Honorius has been pronounced by succeeding Popes a damning heresy. Communion in “one kind,” branded as sin and heresy by Pope Gelasius, is the binding practice of the modern Church of Rome.

This portentous dogma, contradicted by Infallible Popes themselves, rests for acceptance on sheer boldness of assertion overpowering all question. Papal teaching is thus hedged up by an artificial wall invented for the purpose.

The Risk of Error

Do you want an external authority to save you from error ? Then it must save you from thinking, too ; and it must be infallible. To reason is to repel authority. Yet it is Cardinal Newman who says, “Be convinced in your *reason* that the Catholic Church is a teacher sent to you from God, and it is enough.” So it is by one gigantic act of reason, by the exercise of private judgment, that we are to give in our adhesion to the Catholic Church as our authority—an act of reason so stupendous as to swallow up all the risks of liberty of mind.

In view of such self-contradiction, the Church is

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not infallible ; and any Church that claims to be absolutely secure against error is doubted and denied by as many millions of men as submit to it. There is no *unquestioned* authority.

Yes, deference is due to authority. The consensus of Christian teaching in all ages must tell strongly with us in our study of religion. There is a solidarity in human conviction, a continuity in religious judgment, which demands consideration, and which should check mere opinionativeness, the "insurgent spirit which finds itself on the individualistic sea, storm-tossed."¹ But it is not final, decisive authority, forbidding further inquiry, that the belief of past ages carries ; it is only *weight*. Such a body of opinion should *weigh* with us, but has no right to restrain us from the prior duty of clear judgment. If that law of "authority" had ruled in the past, men would never have discovered truth or seen light.

Men of science carry authority. But the authority of their interpretations of nature are not quoted to forbid inquiry into the bases of scientific opinion. On the contrary, search and see, if you will, scientists would say ; it is not our *ipse dixit* that we impose, but our reasons and evidence. Even scientific authority has been often disproved by later science. What was taught by Ptolemy Copernicus and Galileo proved mistaken.

¹ Knight's *Christian Ethic*.

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Yet, like the facts of truth, the stars and heavens remained unchanged ; it was only the interpretation that had become more accurate.

Spiritual Experts

Spiritual experts must carry weight. What the best minds and most pure and noble lives among Christian men and women have held by lasting spiritual instincts is certified as at bottom true. Not so much in intellectual judgments, which more naturally differ, as in profound religious convictions and instincts. The mode of expression may have been at fault ; but age-long faith is certain to have been *rooted* in truth. What has been tried on the scale of ten thousand good lives, what has been attested in the character of the best in many centuries, has its evidence in its fruits.

No Monopoly

But the spiritual experts have not belonged to one organization. The official class of Church rulers, in all communions, have often been far inferior to outside saints. The Church which claimed the most binding authority was the most corrupt and debased, and had to be reformed by the *world*. The Councils that settled the orthodox faith were scenes of most bitter unspiritual wrangling, and authority comes, as Oliver Wendell Holmes said,

“Not from the sad-eyed hermit’s lonely cell,
Not from the conclave where the holy men
Glare on each other, as with angry eyes
They battle for God’s glory and their own
Till, sick of wordy strife, a show of hands
Fixes the faith of ages yet unborn.”

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The spiritual experts are found in all Christian **All Saints** communities; no organic body of ecclesiastics, whether Calvinistic or Catholic, has had a monopoly of them. What their weight attests is, not the theological dogmas, which often are purely academic and have little to do with life, so much as those spiritual elements of universal religion which are transmuted into the spirit of life and conduct. What has thus been tested and proved in Christian character is valid as authority.

Whatever weight the past thought may have with us, our final appeal is still to the original **The Appeal to Christ** authorities, to those "who companied with" Christ and have left their records—this is not "Bibliolatry!"—and above all to Christ Himself. Anything superadded to His teaching—and Catholicism contains a mass of such additions—whether it be true or not, cannot be enforced as vital to the Christian faith. All must justify itself at that Divine Court of Appeal. Our Founder is our Authority.

VIII

The Price of a Catholic's Privilege

UPON those who accept the peace and assurances of the Roman or Anglo-Catholic fold certain conditions are imposed, certain demands are made. For their privileges what price have they to pay?

Surrender of
Judgment

The "One Church" demands surrender of mind. How far Anglo-Catholics go in this direction we shall see forthwith; the Roman Catholic dictum is only more positively formulated. On questions of religion and morals, you must cease to think for yourself, and think what the Church has ordered that all the faithful shall think. You may not even take a doctrine to avizandum, nor doubt your superior's authority and declaration. The doubter is damned. A moment's hesitation is a mortal sin. You must not even investigate the grounds of any article of faith, such as the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, or Purgatory, or Prayers to the Saints. You must accept all, not because of its verified trueness, but because the Church authorities have so pronounced.

The Price of a Catholic's Privilege

You may not read history as written by others than Catholics: it is not safe for your faith that you should read what outsiders record concerning the past deeds of the Church. Numerous historical events, it has been proved overwhelmingly, have been "cooked" in Catholic accounts to suit the Church's purposes. You may not argue with anyone upon your creed: to argue is to expose yourself to the risk of being misled and entrapped in heresy. You may not listen to the advocates of other faiths, nor enter other Churches, for this is a mortal sin. Even conscience and its secrets must be submitted to the judgment and verdict of the Church.

You may not ordinarily study the Bible: the priest will declare to you what the Bible teaches —what, at any rate, the Church teaches, as supreme interpreter of Divine Revelation. It is perilous to your soul to peruse the Bible on your own account. Sometimes one finds modern Catholic preachers professing that a certain guarded permission is given for the study of the Bible. But the statement is accompanied by some discreet qualification which, in actual fact, is imposed in such manner as to shut up the Bible.

**The Bible
for the
Priest**

"If any one without a license presume to read or keep by him the Bible, he shall be disqualified to receive the absolution of his sins till he deliver it up to the ordinary." So ran the law laid down

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by the Catholic authorities at the Council of Trent. One might presume that, under more enlightened conditions, these olden stringent laws have been relaxed. But in the present century the Roman authorities impose the same regulation.

A very remarkable statement was made by Cardinal Wiseman,¹ throwing startling light upon the secret of the power of Roman Catholicism.

A Dangerous
Book

“I have told you that in perusing the works of men who have within these few years become members of the Catholic Church—men of talent and erudition—I have hardly found two of them agree upon the grounds which they record as having induced them to embrace the Catholic religion. But I have also read similar works on the other side, purporting to give the grounds upon which several individuals have abandoned the Catholic Church and become members of some Protestant Communion. . . . Now I have read many of these, and have noted that instead of the rich variety of motives which have brought learned men to the Catholic Church, there is a sad meagreness of reasoning in them, indeed that they all, without exception, give me but one argument.

“The history in every single case is simply this: that the individual by some chance or other, pro-

¹ *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, pp. 18, 19.

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bably through the ministry of some pious person, became possessed of the Word of God, of the Bible; that he perused the Book; that he could not find in it Transubstantiation or Auricular Confession; that he could not discover in it one word of Purgatory or of worshipping of Images. He perhaps goes to the priest and tells him that he cannot find these doctrines in the Bible. His priest argues with him, and endeavours to convince him that he should shut up the book that is leading him astray; he perseveres, he abandons the Communion of the Church of Rome—that is, as it is commonly expressed, the errors of the Church—and becomes a Protestant.”

How
Catholics
Lapse

It is a disastrous explanation. Catholics who turn Protestant lapse always through examining the Bible! Therefore they must not be permitted to examine the original title-deeds of the Church, else they will relinquish the Faith and the Church!

What the Church demands, therefore, is the suppression of the Christian credentials, of the individual intelligence, and of the soul's liberties. What a mind might, if left free to see things as they really are, call black is to be called white on the bare authority of the Church!

This is to sell one's intelligence, to give over one's mind into a sort of mental slavery, to fling away one's highest endowments. Such is the ultimate demand of Catholicism.

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The
Anglo-
Catholic's
Bible

Anglo-Catholic teachers do not impose such close restrictions upon intelligent inquiry. Yet the thorough-going Anglican priest deprecates the exercise of private judgment on central doctrines. He assures his flock that it is their duty, as it is safer, to accept what the Church teaches without question, and warns them against entering a "conventicle" as being a sin as well as a peril to sound faith.

"That every man should study the Bible for himself, putting his own meaning upon the words, cannot be a right plan. . . . The Church is the organ of the Holy Spirit, and as such is the divinely-appointed expositor of the Scriptures."¹

How different was the exhortation of our Lord:
"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me." How different, also, St Paul's attitude towards independent thought: "I speak unto wise men; judge ye what I say."

Hedged up thus within a barricade of artificial restrictions, men shut themselves off from the possibility of looking upon truth with their own eyes and receiving any further light which God may have in store for them. Every serious question is foreclosed, and cannot even be considered. It is the stultification of the faculties with which God has endowed men. Never having thought

¹ *The Catholic Religion*, pp. 345, 346.

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for themselves, they hold a belief which cannot be other than blind, technical, and formal, without moral quality or power in it. Surely this is a great price to pay for supposed safety, a safety which, under any conditions, is doubtful and precariously based.

IX

St Peter and God's Vicars

HAVE either Catholics or Protestants a satisfactory interpretation of those verses, in the sixteenth chapter of St Matthew, on which the system of Catholicism largely depends? It is an old dispute fought out so often and with so little effect that some are nauseated at the very mention of it. But one may still help to disentangle the case, and shew at least what clues to the maze are legitimate. We must have the passage before us in full.

"Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell [R.V.—Hades] shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou

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shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 16-19).

What is to be said of the construction put upon these words and the structure reared thereon by the Church of Rome? The Anglo-Catholic view and other cognate problems will be taken separately.

The Church of Rome teaches that, as Peter was declared by Christ to be the rock on which He would build His Church, that apostle was endowed with supreme authority over the Church, entrusted with absolute power to legislate, teach, judge, condemn, define truth and error with infallible certainty, and appoint to all offices or remove therefrom. He was set over the other Apostles as supreme head of the Church on earth—was, in fact, made chief Vicar of Christ, His Plenipotentiary among men, and entrusted with the keys of heaven and hell. He became Bishop of Rome in 42 A.D., it is said, and to his successors at Rome he passed on his rights and functions, and the Popes¹ of Rome are the unbroken line of his heirs and successors. They and the bishops and priests are empowered to keep the keys of the storehouse of divine grace and therefore of

Was St
Peter
Pope?

¹ The Pope is etymologically the "Papa,"—as seen in the term "Papacy,"—with full power and authority over men as his children.

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men's destinies, to dispense saving sacraments or to withhold them.

Now this structure is so colossal that, if it is to justify itself, it must be supported by powerful evidence, must be broad-based upon the general teaching of Christ and the New Testament and not rely only on a single phrase capable of a different and otherwise satisfactory interpretation.

To begin with, two hundred years elapsed before any bishop of Rome claimed supremacy. Father Luke Rivington gives away the question by stating that not till the fourth century did Popes declare themselves as such. The claim is thus of late growth, and therefore historically worthless.

St Peter
on the
Question

In St Peter's own letters we may best learn whether he regarded himself as set over the other Apostles, and therefore over the whole Church. In his first Epistle (v. 1) his own words are: "The elders which are among you I exhort, *who am also an elder.*" He is not "lord" over them, but speaks as their fellow-elder. That he was the leading spirit among the Apostles is apparent, as being the one of conspicuously aggressive temperament and faculty. But by being the leading spirit he did not therefore become their Pope. He was enjoined to feed the sheep and the lambs, but that was the mark of confidence Christ shewed him upon his restoration after his great denial. When converted, he was to strengthen his brethren.

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Having been restored and strengthened after his weakness, he was to strengthen others in turn; but to strengthen cannot mean to rule.

Then Peter was the one man who, on the great question of the relation of Jewish to Gentile Christians, was convicted of trimming and inconsistency, the one Apostle whose vacillating policy was condemned and repudiated as wrong by the Assembly at Antioch. Paul withstood him to the face, had a hot quarter of an hour with him, and exposed his dissimulations. He who had openly denied his Lord at the critical hour of His trial was now convicted of dissembling (Gal. ii. 11 ff.). Very lovable, very devoted, and very ardent he was, but certainly not infallible—more fallible, perhaps, than any of his comrades. **St Peter at Fault**

Nor was he supreme among the Apostles. The compact arranged between Peter and Paul was that the former was to devote his energies to work among "the Circumcision," the latter to missionary enterprise among the Gentiles. *If*, therefore, *any* Apostle was charged with the supreme care of the European Church, it was Paul, and that, too, by agreement with Peter. *If* Peter was set over any Church, it was the Jewish section of the Christian Church. How, then, can it be supposed that Peter supplanted Paul as chief organiser of the Gentile Church? **Supreme?**

It is a disputed and still unsettled point **At Rome?**

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whether he ever was at Rome. The evidence is not decisive. Scripture does not give any information on the subject. But even *if* he did visit that city, what does that prove? If he had been bishop of Rome from A.D. 42, could Paul, in writing to the Roman Christians some time in the fifties, have composed his great Epistle without referring to Peter as head of the Church which he was addressing? Could he have ignored the bishop, and so have snubbed him? Why no greeting, no passing allusion, no acknowledgment? The silence of the Epistle to the Romans on this point, whilst by no means proving that Peter never paid a visit to Rome, does furnish strong presumption that he was not overseer of the Church at Rome.

St Peter's Epistles We have in our hands what is said to be Peter's last letter before his death, and, had he been invested with exceptional powers, he would have been certain to make some allusion to his successor and the exercise and safeguarding of these powers. But in none of his letters does the impartial reader discover even the reflection or hint of the existence of such privileges. Is the Church of later centuries, then, entitled to endow him with place and powers which he did not claim for himself or employ in his own ministry?

Leading Spirit Peter was indeed foremost leader in the first preaching days of the disciples at Jerusalem; but

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his prominence resulted from his gifts and his courage, and nowhere is there the faintest indication that he held any special status. Anyone who is intimately acquainted with the New Testament is sufficiently aware that Peter was no Pope, nor shadow of a Pope, but was an enthusiastic, impulsive, heroic leader in the pioneer work of Christianity.

Vicar of Christ on earth, indeed! Whom did Christ repeatedly declare He was leaving as His Vicar among men? No mortal, but the Holy Spirit, who was to be given, not to one man, nor to one set of men, but to all who should believe on His name.

Whatever Christ's utterances may have meant, certainly they do *not* imply the Poppedom of St Peter nor justify the Papal claim. They cannot mean that, long centuries afterwards, certain men in Rome might add article after article to the faith necessary to salvation; might create events and dogmas and project them back into primitive Christianity; might, for Christ's simple law of faith and love and service, substitute submission to an ecclesiastical autocracy; might set aside the Apostolic Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and say in effect,

"Anathema Maranatha! Hark!
Be he sinner or be he saint,
There is no place in the saving Ark
For one who keeps but a cobweb fain

Walter C.
Smith's
"Hilda"

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Of doubt in his heart or doubt in his head
About any one article I have read.
'Credo,' that is the key of heaven ;
The more incredible, so much more
Virtue lies in the Credo given
To open the everlasting door."

X

The Rock of the Church

WHAT did our Lord mean when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?"

Jesus has been asking St Peter and his companions, Who do people say I am? Then He enquires, and who do you say I am? Peter replies: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus is radiant. Hitherto He has been regarded as a prophet. Peter is the first to clearly perceive His true, spiritual dignity, the first to discover the great secret of His divine descent and divine mission. "Only the Spirit of my Father could have revealed that to you," says Jesus in effect; "the name I once gave you was 'Peter, the rock,' and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 15-18). "On this Rock"

Which does He refer to in the phrase, "on this rock"—to Peter Himself, or to Peter's statement of an epoch-making truth?¹ Scholars and in-

¹ It cannot conceivably, in the circumstances, refer to Christ Himself. To suppose, as Augustine followed by

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interpreters cannot agree on this point ; and all I am entitled to attempt is to set forth what under each case would be the natural interpretation.

Christ's
two
Terms

But first observe the terms which Christ uses : "Thou art ὁ πέτρος," a separable fragment of a rock or stone.¹ For the solid rock the Greek language had a quite distinct term, πέτρα and it is this distinct word that Christ now imports. "And upon this πέτρα, *rock*, I will build my Church." This distinction is not fanciful ; it appears throughout Homer, where πέτρα is always the bed-rock, πέτρος a stone. Clearly Christ, in passing from the one term to the other, intends some distinction. According to the best scholarship,² the feminine ταυτη τη πετρα refers not to the *name* itself but to the *thing* under the name. The *thing* in that case would be either the idea underlying the name or else the thing just said, either the "rock-man" character or the fundamental bed-rock truth just uttered. And why "*this*" rock ? If He meant Peter himself, He

Dean Plumptre supposes, that at the word "this" He may have pointed to Himself is not only to beg the question, but to make Christ's meaning leap away from the line of thought which He is following at the moment. Of course, Christ is the Rock under all, but He is not speaking of Himself here.

¹ In 2 Maccabees i. 16 and iv. 41 it is used of pieces of stone with which people pelted or "bombarded" their foes.

² Cf. Meyer's Commentary *in loco*.

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would have naturally said: "On thee as a rock." By "this" He directs the mind away from the man to the thing suggested by his name.

If "this rock," on which the Church was to be built, was the great truth which Peter had been the first to enunciate, if it was the fundamental truth of Christ being "the Son of the Living God," then the history of eighteen centuries proves the accuracy of the statement; for this truth has been the foundation of the universal Christian Church. Creeds and forms differ and change, but Christ as Son of the Living God has ever been and still is the net basis of Christianity underlying each and all Christian denominations.

The gates of Hades have not prevailed against this truth. The councils—which in ancient Hebrew times were held at the city gates—of the gloomy grave or the dark world of evil forces are unable to defeat the powers of this "Son of the Living God."

If, however, Peter was in *any* sense the "rock" on which Christ was to rear His Church, we remember the part he played in founding the Church, the place he occupied as the first preacher of the Gospel, as the first defender of the faith. His sermon at Pentecost was the means of bringing three thousand souls into the Church. As a mere matter of historical fact, the organised Church of Christ goes back to the notable day

St Peter
Struck
Rock

The
Gates of
Hades

If St
Peter was
the Rock?

The People and the Priest

when its founding was accomplished, when Peter was the "Rock-man." Why should Protestants hesitate to accord this place to Peter? This hesitation springs only from the fear of playing into the hands of Roman Catholicism. But when the function allotted to Peter on that day, as the bold spokesman of the first Christians, is seen in its true light, it does not yield an inch of foothold to Papal claims.

Change the metaphor—thereby getting rid of the ecclesiastical associations which now cling to the old metaphor—and say that Peter "floated" the Christian Church: does it follow that none are secure on the high seas of life who are not in Peter or in one Church which claims a monopoly of Peter?

Mission-
aries
"found-
ing"
Churches

It might have been said of Mackay that he was the rock of the Christian Church at Uganda: it was built on him—on Christ ultimately of course, but on him as the historic founder of the Church in Central Africa. It might be said of the first to found the Christian Church in the South Sea Islands or in any other heathen country. Much more may it be said, but not otherwise may it be understood, of Peter on that day when the Christian Church of the world was founded. It is the same idea as Paul puts in words which no one misunderstands: "Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. ii. 20).

XI

The Power of the Keys

A FASCINATING interest attaches to the striking sentence spoken by our Lord to St Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." What did He mean? It is not difficult to find the natural and adequate interpretation.

Does He hand over to St Peter, to a mortal, fallible, sinful man—the man who afterwards denied Christ and still later stood convicted of dissembling—the power and right to lock heaven and the storehouse of grace, or to unlock it to whom he will? Is it in keeping with the general drift and spirit of Christ's teaching to suppose that He would commit to an imperfect human being the keys of bliss and of woe, the control of human destinies? Would He delegate to any man the functions which none can exercise justly save the All-knowing God? Is a weak and erring mortal—or even an order of men—to grant or withhold forgiveness, to give indulgences for the life to come, to ban for ever men who differ in

The Keys
of the
Kingdom

The People and the Priest

their reading of the New Testament, to lift souls out of Purgatory, and generally to act as Divine Plenipotentiary? Is it *like Christ*? Is it not rather a stupendous usurpation of divine privilege?

What, then, is the true "power of the keys," the actual "privilege of Peter"?

The Clue The clue to the thread of His thought may be found in the incident which gave rise to His declaration. Peter has just shewn that he perceives who Jesus is, and what is His mission among men. He has struck "rock." He has discovered the great secret, the secret of the ages, the "mystery" of the Messiah. This truth which he has just uttered in his great confession is the germ of that revelation which is to bless mankind. Peter has found the clue to that faith which is to transform continents and races of men, and alter the moral atmosphere of the world. All unknown lies before the disciples the spiritual kingdom of heaven, the kingship of the Son of God. (Christ does not mean "Heaven" above, when He speaks, as He often does speak, of the "kingdom of heaven"; He means the monarchy of heavenly rule on earth, the *empire* of His moral sway.) A great, new, heaven-like Empire is to be opened; and this man has caught sight of the secret round which it is to gather. (That it was the secret round which the primitive Church gathered is seen in the fact that the formula for admission to Christian fellowship

The Kingdom

The Power of the Keys

was belief in "Christ, the Son of the living God.") Peter has found the clue to the emerging revelation, which will yet be more perfectly shewn to him.

It is with this key, this truth, that Peter will be called upon to throw open the Christian Kingdom to mankind. To him is given the splendid privilege of throwing wide the gates of the new Empire of Christ to three thousand men and women on the day of Pentecost. He is the first to fling open the Christian Kingdom to the Jews on that great Opening Day—to the Gentile world likewise, when he opens the gates of life to Cornelius, the first convert from heathendom.

The
Gates
thrown
open

To inaugurate a kingdom which was to gain such splendid dominion in the world, to be the first to open to all human-kind the privileges which had been confined to a few—certainly that was the "privilege of Peter," an enviable privilege, a sufficient fulfilment of Christ's promise, and a worthy honour to the man who first saw the secret of the fundamental bed-rock of that kingdom.

St Peter's
Privi-
lege

Christ may be taken as the best interpreter of Himself. He once said: "Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken away *the key of knowledge*: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." Ye have taken away the key of knowledge. Here is Christ's own key to the meaning which He puts into His metaphor of "the Keys."

The Key
of Know-
ledge

The People and the Priest

To Peter first, and to the other disciples after him, was given the key of the new knowledge, knowledge of the great secret of the salvation of men by "the Son of the living God;" and, at the founding of the Christian State, he uses this key to roll back the gates of life. By St Paul also, as he says (Acts xiv. 27), "God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

**James
Watt**

James Watt—to draw an illustration from an inferior sphere—when he detected the power of steam and the possibility of applying that power to drive an engine, held in his grasp the key to the great kingdom which steam was yet to win for man's service. He held the key which afterwards opened wide the commerce of the world, which brought distant shores within easy reach of each other, and started a new era in the mechanical, productive, and commercial history of mankind.

**Coper-
nicus**

Copernicus, by his discovery of the true centre of the planetary system, had in his possession that key of knowledge which opened the kingdom of the stars and added unguessed blessings to mankind. The man who has found such a secret, either an epoch-making truth or a new power in nature, has a key with which he may open a kingdom of earth.

Peter was foremost in discovering the new revelation, the "*power* of God unto salvation." At first imperfectly perceived, but afterwards more

The Power of the Keys

firmly grasped, the discovery of the "Son of the living God" had power to throw open to mankind a new life and a new realm, the spiritual kingdom of God here and hereafter.

Were these keys to be retained in the hands of Peter, and kept as the sole monopoly of a priestly order of men? When Christ said, "You shall be privileged to open the Christian Empire with such a key-truth as you have found to-day," did He mean to imply, "and you are to keep it in your own hand and decide what shall be the conditions of admission, and what particular dogmas and forms shall be imposed on all who would enter, and determine to which individuals the door is to be opened, and against which it is to be shut?"

Watt's secret of the power of steam was not made the monopoly of a Watt Succession, not even of an Order of Engineers. It became the property of all who could understand it and would employ it to drive their machinery.

The Gospel of Jesus as Son of the living God and Messiah among men, which was once, like the infant Jesus in the arms of Mary, in the care of Peter and his comrades, was to become the open secret of the world. Everyone who receives the secret and encounters others who are without it has the same "power of the keys"—the same in kind, though perhaps less in the scope of opportunity, less in the extensive issues

The People and the Priest

Mission-
aries and
Mothers

that may follow, and hence less striking to the imagination. Carey entering India, M'All entering Paris, Patteson entering Melanesia, had the power of the keys—as also has every missionary in half heathen parts of our great cities. A mother teaching her boy the wonderful, winsome story of the living God and His loving Son the gracious Saviour is applying the keys to throw open the gate of the Christian kingdom to the young soul. Every Christian in presence of fellow-men who are yet ignorant of Christ's secret of eternal life possesses the power of the keys.

“No Man
shutteth”

With doors thrown open so wide, has any close corporation of priests the right to stand at the door and admit only those who bear the Roman or Anglo-Catholic mark? Was it a religious guild or a Pope of Rome, or was it Jesus Christ who was referred to in Revelation as “He who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth?” Yet mortal men in Rome, and some mortal Anglo-Catholics in England, usurp privileges and powers which none but Christ can rightly use. He has opened the door wide as His great Heart's love, and he says, “Him that cometh unto me [He does not indicate that it must be *via* the Church and the priest], I will in no wise cast out.”

The Spirit of Christ, whether in or apart from

The Power of the Keys

any human organisations, keeps the keys to the heart of man, to—in the lines of the Roman Catholic poet, Mr Francis Thompson—

“ The hold that falls not when the town is got,
The heart’s heart whose immured plot
Hath keys yourself keep not. . . .
Its keys are at the cincture hung of God,
Its gates are trepidant at His nod ;
By Him its floors are trod.”

XII

The Priest's Power to Absolve

THE secret feeling in the heart of some candid Protestants is that Catholics have the best of it in being able to use the apparently plain meaning of two Scripture passages for which Protestants have no adequate interpretation. And a still more secret feeling is one of wonder that our Lord did not prevent ages of error by putting His thought in less ambiguous language. Let us see whether these feelings are justified.

The
Power to
"Bind"
and
"Loose"

The two passages, the one giving the power to "bind" and "loose," the other authority to "remit" and "retain" sins, while closely akin, do not refer to identical functions. In both, however, the Gospels put one thing beyond question, namely, that, whatever these powers were, they were not given to the Apostles alone. As will be shewn, other disciples besides the Apostles were present when Christ made these remarkable statements. They must, therefore, be interpreted in such a way as to suit Christ's disciples generally.

Any reader who is not interested in the ana-

The Priest's Power to Absolve

lytical study of the verses and desires to know what is their interpretation may pass to the later pages of this chapter.

Take the less difficult passage first.

It was first addressed to St Peter: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 19.) The identical words are addressed by Christ a little later to the disciples generally, in reference to the right method of dealing with one brother who has trespassed against another. "Whatsoever ye shall bind," etc. (Matt. xviii. 15-20).

What was this "binding" and "loosing" understood to mean by the Jews of the time? The authority of Lightfoot and all Biblical scholars is decisive. It referred to the work of the Rabbis and scribes as interpreters of the law, and not to priestly functions. When a Rabbi or Judge pronounced a thing true, right, or legitimate, he was said to have "loosed" it, made it free to people. When he pronounced it false, wrong, or illegitimate, he was said to "bind" it, shut it off and preclude it. "The School of Shammai *bound* when it declared this or that act to be a transgression of the Sabbath law, or forbade divorce on any but the one ground of adultery; the School of Hillel *loosed* when it set men free from the obligations thus imposed." It had nothing

As used
among
Jews

The People and the Priest

whatever to do with the functions of priests, and only of teachers or prophets, and cannot therefore be used as a support of sacerdotalism to-day. It has no bearing, says Meyer, on the forgiveness of sins, for it does not refer to sins at all. How, then, would it be exercised?

Ex-
amples

When St Peter resisted the attempt made by the Judaizing party to "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples" (Acts xv. 10), he was loosing—and that was ratified in heaven. When St Paul laid down the Christian principle which should guide the Corinthians in eating or abstaining from meat offered to idols, he was binding in one direction and loosing in another. Many things which the Jews had bound—as, for example, what might be done on the Sabbath, where men ought to worship, and by what offerings and rites, etc.—were by the Spirit of Christ in the Christian disciples to be loosed and declared no longer binding or were to be brought under a larger law. Doing good of any kind on the Sabbath was to be declared innocent. Christians were to be "made free of it." Many customs regarded by the Gentiles as legitimate and innocent would be bound under moral prohibitions.

New In-
sight,
New
Laws

Christ was to give them, by His Spirit animating them, a new insight into the moral and spiritual laws of the Divine kingdom, by which they would discriminate according to the eternal principles

The Priest's Power to Absolve

which Christ had given in germ and which would be ratified in heaven. It was not a *function* given to an "order" of men, but a power given to those who received the Spirit of Christ. St Paul meant the same thing when he said : " He that is spiritual judgeth all things."¹

At many a point in history has this discriminating power shewn itself. For centuries slavery seemed permissible, sanctioned by the institution among the Hebrews. A truer sense arose among Christian people, the sense of the right to freedom with which every man is endowed, and that which had been loosed before was bound through the loosing of the slaves. And the great prophets of this new law, Wilberforce and Clarkson, were not priests, but laymen moved by the Spirit of Christ.

Rightly understood, how little connection have these words with the claim of priests to bind the fate of individual souls !

But what shall we say of those words spoken after the Resurrection: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 22, 23)? Here, once more, some very fine and interesting points

The
Power to
"Remit"
and
"Retain"

¹ Origen wrote : " If any who is not Peter, and has not the qualities here mentioned, believes that he can bind on earth like Peter, so that what he binds is bound in heaven, such an one is puffed up, not knowing the meaning of the Scriptures."

The People and the Priest

come into view, if we look with insight into the sense of the words.

More than the Apostles were present when Christ spoke thus. With the discovery of this fact the claim of Catholic priests to be the sole vicars of God empowered to remit or retain men's sins falls to the ground. It is on this verse they rely; and they assume that the power was given to the Apostles alone, who gave it to their successors. But Apostolic Succession, even if demonstrated as valid and vital, would not save the situation; for, whatever the gift was, it was given to others besides the Apostles. Verify the statement.

Given
to all
Disciples

St John does not say so. But in the parallel passage in St Luke (xxiv. 33-37) we read that the two disciples from Emmaus, who were not of the Twelve, "returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together and *them that were with them*. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread. And *as they thus spake* Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you," etc. We see, without a break in time, "them that were with them," and the two from Emmaus, part of the company to whom Christ gave the power to remit and retain.

What the power was we may, or may not, be

The Priest's Power to Absolve

able to fully understand ; but, whatever it was, it was delivered equally to other disciples as to the Apostles, and consequently is not the monopoly of any apostolic or priestly order of men.

Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics have both St Augustine and Dr Pusey against them—if that is of any authoritative consequence to them, as, however, it is not to us ! St Augustine said : “ The promise in St John is addressed to all believers everywhere.” Dr Pusey, speaking on *Absolution*, said : “ These words [of this passage], like the eyes of the Lord, look every way, and may include all forgiveness, whenever or wheresoever any sins are remitted through the agency of men.”

Further, this power depends on the possession of the Holy Spirit. Catholics claim, what I urge against their theory, that it was in virtue of the gift made in the same breath, “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” that those present were empowered to remit and retain. All the disciples, as well as the Apostles, were made depositories of the Holy Spirit and of the powers He gave. Therefore, all disciples of Christ everywhere and always have the same power *according as they are possessed and illumined by the Spirit*. And there are at least as many good men and women outside the Roman and Anglo-Catholic Churches who are visibly possessed and governed by the Spirit of Christ as

St
Augustine and
Dr Pusey

Condi-
tions :
1, The
Gift of the
Spirit

The People and the Priest

there are within the "Catholic fold." They all, therefore, have this power.

For the first twelve centuries these words on which this huge priestly fabric is built were not used in the ordination of any Christian minister of any Church; nor are they used in the Greek Church to-day for that purpose. It was only in the thirteenth century that they were introduced into the Ordinals of the Latin Church, when they seemed to serve the abnormal claims of the sacerdotal and pontifical authorities. The Church, which originally included all Christians, was now identified with the clergy, who usurped the spiritual powers delivered by Christ to the Church in all its members. And to-day Anglicans retain this late mediæval use of the words in the ordination of priests.

The
Priest
does not
forgive

It will, however, be a surprise to many good Catholics, and news to many Protestants, to learn that the priest does not profess to forgive sins for certain. People are commonly led to suppose that when the priest pronounces absolution pardon is absolutely conveyed and effected. But that is not what Catholics say when the point is raised. Forgiveness is conditional, depending upon the sinner's inner state. The priest does not profess to be a discerner of spirits or a reader of the heart. If you have made a good confession to me, says the Roman priest in substance, and if you repent

The Priest's Power to Absolve

and believe, I pronounce in God's name the forgiveness of your sins. The same condition is put in the Prayer Book.

"The person who absolved, absolved not infallibly as a judge, but conditionally as a servant—always *referring the ratification of his act to the Searcher of hearts,*" says Mr Sadler.¹ But those who confess to the priest are led to think that by confessing they have fulfilled all conditions on their part, and that the "Father in God" absolutely secures their pardon. The only doubtful point, however, still remains doubtful, namely, whether they have in their inmost minds turned away penitently from their iniquities and do trust wholly in the mercy of God in Christ. If that be absent, the priest's absolution is vain.

Condi-
tions :
2, State of
the Heart

What, then, is the function of the priest in the matter? Not merely to utter God's mercy to the sinner, he says. Not simply to voice God's love and assure him on God's behalf. "This absolution is not merely declaratory." What, then, is his exact part in the process? It is that he has been entrusted as God's priest with the power to dispense or withhold Divine mercy.

What if the true penitent has already lifted up his heart to God in humble pleading and trust? Can God do nothing for him *direct*? "A man can

Going to
God
direct

¹ Mr Sadler's *Church Doctrine Bible Truth*, pp. 238-258 (49th thousand); the accepted authority.

The People and the Priest

pray and exercise faith without the intervention of his fellow-man, but he cannot absolve himself ; and so, if he receives any benefit from these appointments of Christ, he must submit to receive that benefit through the instrumentality or intervention of another," *i.e.* the priest.¹

"Go to
my
Agent"

Must God, then, be supposed—*salvâ reverentiâ*—to say to the humble penitent : It is of no use to come to me. I have delegated the whole matter to my agents in the priesthood and I extend mercy to those who apply through the agents who dispense it for me. Go to them, and they will present your case. Might not the penitent who knew his Bible say reverently : O Father, Thy Holy Son was, I thought, the only Mediator, and He said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

To present the case in plain, bald terms, free from the mists of sophistry, is enough to convince any open mind that, whatever Christ meant, He

¹ Mr Sadler (p. 258), who says : "If we look to God's secret will, He may pardon the same man at the moment when he first believes. But still there must be room for the declared purpose of God" to remit sins through absolution by His delegates. In utter confusion, escaping by clouding the water with vague phrases, he confesses that he cannot make his meaning clear. A mystery indeed ! But *he creates his own mystery*. If he could give no exact meaning to his literal sacerdotal interpretation of Christ's words, ought he not to have sought clear sense in another and sufficient interpretation ?

The Priest's Power to Absolve

did not mean to give to an "order" of priests the monopoly of His grace so that they alone could dispense it, with the consequence that no penitent believer could get it direct from God in Christ through a purely spiritual channel.

What *do* the words mean, then? Take first ^{Interpre-} the broad, general sense, and then the specific ^{tation} application.

What Christ says in effect seems to be this—it being remembered always that He was speaking to disciples generally, and not to Apostles alone :—

You throw open the gates of the kingdom of heaven on earth. You bind spiritual laws on men; you unbind others. What you do will be for the binding and the loosing of many souls. And what by your ministry is being bound on earth in men's choice, lives, and character, is being bound in heaven's decrees, by the law of the ^{Christian} supreme will of God. The lines of truth and ^{Issues,} falsehood, of faith and unbelief, of penitence and ^{Heaven's} impenitence, of pardon and condemnation, are ^{Decrees} lines which are deeply laid in the eternal laws of heaven. By the ministry of the Gospel and of the Holy Spirit you are bringing to bear upon people's lives and fates those moral and spiritual forces which operate in exact harmony with their equivalents in the decisive will of the Divine Arbiter. Heaven's verdict answers to the principles and issues of the Spirit's ministry

The People and the Priest

through you, and to the chosen attitude of men in response. The work you are the means of doing corresponds to the will of the Eternal. "Now is the judgment." The discrimination between heart and heart, resulting from the Gospel ministry of all good men, runs on lines based on the mind and law of heaven, and is not liable to be reversed by any decision of the final Court of Appeal. "What thou doest it shall be for ever."

The Orrery

An orrery¹ in a certain Northern museum had a great fascination for my boyhood: the central globe representing the Sun, the nearest ball Mercury, the third the Earth, the others, at relative distances and in relative size, the other planets of the solar system. The visitor, as he turns the handle outside the huge glass globe, sees the motions of the planets in the sky. What is done on earth is done in the heavens. The movements of the orrery are based on the realities of the sky.

The lines on which the dispensation of the Gospel moves in the determination of men's character are given in such form as to correspond to those of God's ultimate decree. The working of Christianity on earth is the miniature of the eternal. In so far as the ambassadors of Christ are filled with the Spirit of Christ and are moved and

¹ Named after the Earl of Orrery, who invented it.

The Priest's Power to Absolve

inspired by that Divine afflatus, their earthly work has its equivalent in Christ's Judgment.

Not that messengers of Christ are infallible—^{Not infallible} although, in proportion as they have the Spirit of Christ possessing and ruling their minds and hearts, their operations in dealing with men's souls will approach the absolutely true. The orrery is not quite perfect. The orbit of its metal balls is a circle; the orbit of the planets is an ellipse. Yet the earthly representation of the Divine mind, as well as of the planets' movements is sufficiently true to express the reality in the heavens.

"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained."

Do Catholics believe that in every instance in which a priest, episcopally ordained, has pronounced the words, "Absolvo te," all the sins of the individual man or woman have been unconditionally remitted and forgiven? It is what both most Catholics and most Protestants suppose. But press Catholic teachers on the point, and they, wisely and truly, admit that of course it is assumed that the petitioner for absolution has made a good and penitent confession. In fact the remission is *conditional*. The words are not absolute. The Apostles had in certain cases the gift of reading hearts and discerning spirits, as in the case of Ananias and of Simon Magus, and therefore they could pronounce upon such individuals. But

The
Priest's
Claim
given
away

The People and the Priest

priests do not claim that they have succeeded to this power, as searchers of the heart, any more than to the Apostles' power of working miracles. In absolving, they do not use Christ's words absolutely, but conditionally. If the moral and spiritual conditions are not fulfilled, their pronouncement is vain. All they do, by their own half-concealed admission, is to proclaim the Divine pardon to those who repent and believe.

True Absolution

After all, therefore, their absolution is only *declaratory*. They are authorised to declare in the name of God that God does absolutely forgive and remit sin in every individual who fulfils the spiritual conditions. And I accept that as exactly the power given by Christ—only given to *all disciples* of Christ, and not merely to an imaginary Apostolic Succession. *Others than Apostles* received it from Christ, and in like manner *all* who have themselves received the truth are authorised to declare in Heaven's name to every man that, if he indeed repents of his sin and trusts in Divine mercy, God absolutely forgives him.

God's Echo

Not that he or any man is the *depository* of that grace, holding it in his power. But he is the spokesman of Christ, to voice Heaven's will, to bring close home to men the pledged and indefeasible assurance of God's forgiveness, *if* they truly repent and believe. *Priests can do no more than this*, and all Christians who have the Spirit

The Priest's Power to Absolve

of Christ in them are in the very same manner and measure the mouthpiece of Christ. They do not pronounce upon the *individual* case: to do that they would require to be omniscient discerners of the spirit of the individual; but they announce and proclaim love and mercy, not in their own name but on the authority of Christ.¹

What a comfort it is, when some one is weighted by the sense of sin and afraid to credit God's mercy, to hear a man of God voice the Divine pledge to him. "Does your heart really turn from your sin? Have you confessed it fully to God? Do you accept the good news of Christ and trust in Him? Then be comforted; I tell you in God's name that he forgives you; before you called His answering mercy was at your door, and even already he *has* pardoned you; look to Christ and see the proof and channel of that compassion; it is not I who have any power to forgive you, but

Good
Hearing

¹ The Absolution in the Prayer Book bears this sense, when taken naturally: "Who hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, *being penitent*, the absolution and remission of sins." First a reference to the Divine commission; then follows the general declaration upon the fulfilment of the spiritual conditions: "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel." Then a suitable prayer for the spiritual conditions: "Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance, etc." See the similar conditions in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

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I have authority, as God's spokesman, to declare and pronounce His love and grace to you; be assured, and go away in peace." Thus he "specialises what is universal . . . he specialises the universal fact of the love of God to those who are listening to him then and there, saying, "The love of God the Absolver I authoritatively proclaim to be *yours*." ¹

God's
Vicars

This is indeed to be God's vicar, God's priest, in the universal spiritual sense—to interpret God's heart to the heart of the anxious sinner, to minister love and consoling truth. Clergymen and ministers who have received the Holy Ghost, that is, who are spiritually minded, are specially entitled to pronounce such absolution *only* because they are specially designated to this spiritual work and have behind them the Church which has so designated them, but not through being endowed with any special power as the priestly depositories of grace and as members of a sacerdotal caste.

Priests
All

All good Christians have the same priestly power and the same authority in the name of the common Master.²

For an episcopal "order" of priests to claim that this forgiving mercy of God cannot be obtained

¹ F. W. Robertson's *Sermons*, iii. 73.

² For a further exposition of priesthood, see p. 171. See also Bishop Lightfoot's *Christian Ministry*, pp. 267, 268, where the minister is likewise described as a "mouthpiece."

The Priest's Power to Absolve

by a believing penitent applying *direct* to God through the "one Mediator," without their official pronouncement and certificate, is to imprison Heaven's free grace within a close guild, to monopolise the light of Christ's universal Gospel, and audaciously usurp the power that belongs to God only.

It was Christ's consistent habit to put truth in Christ's bold, absolute, unqualified form—as when He ^{way of Speaking} insisted on "hating father and mother." He left his statements to qualify one another. Saying "Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted," He omits mention of intermediate means; by a swift expression He leaps over the process to the result.

A missionary will speak of having "made so many converts"; and everyone understands that he has condensed his statement which in full would have been that he "had been the means by which the Spirit of Christ had won so many converts." In similar fashion the remitting of men's sins is here spoken of as if it were the preacher's own absolute and unconditional act, when clearly the preacher is but the prophet of God declaring the remission which God gives to lamented sin.¹

Whose soever sins you are the means of lifting ^A ^{Hebraism}

¹ Sins against the Church the Church of course can remit. Hence St Paul: "To whom ye forgive anything I forgive also." But these form a small proportion of human sins, and are not in view here.

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from men's consciences are indeed remitted ; whatever penitent hearts you are able to assure of mercy so that they believe are absolved by Divine decree. You are not dealing in speculations of your own, nor offering mere probabilities, nor promising pardon at the last when the Judgment Day has come. Their sins are judged and remitted even now. You have Heaven's authority behind your words of love ; all are ratified above.

It is an emphatic Hebraism, in which for the sake of stress the salient word is repeated, as in "Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." It is the emphatic assurance of Divine remission through the ministering of the Gospel to penitent hearts.

The
Spirit not
bound

In so far as men have the Spirit of Christ they are true prophets of God's mind to men. The more Spirit-possessed the spokesman is, the more effectual will be his office in leading men to open their hearts to receive the grace proclaimed. And one thing is demonstrated by the work of the various spokesmen of Christ, namely, that spiritual power to ease the consciences of sinners and lead them into the light and assurance of pardon is displayed no more by priests of Catholic Churches than by ministers of other Churches and even by consecrated laymen. Spurgeon and Professor Drummond and unordained evangelists have in different ways had Divine attestation to their min-

The Priest's Power to Absolve

istry in the experience of thousands of hearts ; and they represent spiritual helpers as numerous outside the "Catholic fold" as inside it. Whether the above interpretation satisfies or no, the passage shews that the gift of Christ is made to all disciples and not to a close corporation, and is conveyed, not merely to those admitted to a caste of officials, some of whom are far from being spiritually-minded, but to all, whether within the Catholic Churches or outside, who are illumined and moved by the Holy Ghost. The Divine sign-manual is not official authentication—which is important for regularity of Church order—but spiritual power, which ignores all human walls of partition.

Tertullian put it : "In accordance with the ^{Tertullian} person of Peter it is to spiritual men that this power will correspondingly appertain, either to an apostle or else to a prophet, and thus, from the time when our Lord said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them,' every number of persons who may have combined together into this faith is accounted a Church from the author and consecrator, and accordingly the Church, it is true, will forgive sins, but the Church of the Spirit by means of a spiritual man, not the Church which consists of a number of Bishops, for the right and arbitrament is the Lord's not the servant's, God's Himself not the priest's."

XIII

Confession and Ghostly Counsel

Canon
Gore

WHEN Canon Gore, who holds a high place in the esteem of all Christians for his learning and lofty character, publicly sanctions and enjoins confession to the priest, there is little need to go further for evidence of the Anglo-Catholic return to that practice. "The aim of confession before a priest," he has said, "is not chiefly direction and personal guidance, but it is a tribunal of merciful judgment which the priest is called upon to exercise in the name of Christ, and an essential part of all true penitence is the readiness to suffer and be punished for sin."¹ That is, being inter-

¹ At the same College Festival (Ely, see *Church Times*, June 10, 1898), the Bishop of Lincoln, Canon Newbolt, and other Bishops and church dignitaries declared in favour of "hearing private confessions in the open church," and of special training by the study of manuals for the confessors' functions. See also *The Catholic Religion*, p. 288—sold by the hundred thousand as an Anglo-Catholic manual—where Bishop Sparrow's words are quoted with approval: "In order that this power [absolution by the priest] may be exercised, it is needful for the sinner seeking forgiveness

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puted, confession is to be the regular and normal act of the sinner, the tribunal at which his conduct is to be judged and his sin absolved, and the due penance imposed and accepted. Here we have substantially the Roman confessional, with the exception that it is not made obligatory. But constraint, if no compulsion, is used by not a few priests of the Anglican Church. Canon Eyton, urging "resistance to the re-establishment of spiritual tyranny," says there are "too many signs of such a revival, for example, in the *practical enforcement of confession* on confirmation candidates, and other young persons."

This is not the light in which the Prayer Book sets confession. There it is named only as permissive for special occasions, in cases in which a man "feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter," and "cannot quiet his own conscience herein [by the regular prayers], but requireth further comfort or counsel," "that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly [spiritual] counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience."¹

The
Prayer
Book

to open his heart by confession of sin . . . as referred to in the Prayer Book." In the writer's parish (Willesden), as in other parishes, auricular confession to the priest is regularly practised in certain Anglo-Catholic churches.

¹ Cf. *Order for the Visitation of the Sick* and the *Order for Holy Communion*. Provision for regular

The People and the Priest

The Method of Con- fession

It may be of interest to the uninitiated to learn what is the "Method of Confession." The following is the Roman Catholic method, and the only substantial difference in the form recommended for Anglo-Catholics lies in the omission of any reference to the Virgin Mary and angels and saints.¹

"Kneeling down at the side of your ghostly father, make the sign of the cross, saying: 'Pray, father, give me your blessing, for I have sinned.' Then say the first part of the Confiteor, as follows: 'I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, father, that I have sinned exceedingly, in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.' Then say, 'Since my last confession, which was so many weeks or months ago, I accuse myself, etc.' After this accuse yourself of your sins, adding after each the number of times that you have been guilty of

auricular confession was struck out of the Prayer Book in 1552, and the present rubrics and "Orders," although elastic, clearly do not contemplate confession as the stated and normal process for the remissions of sins—only as the resort for those burdened with *special* offences and scruples otherwise incurable. Canon Gore's language declares the opposite.

¹ See *The Catholic Religion*, p. 293.

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it, and such circumstances as may very considerably aggravate the guilt. After you have confessed all that you can remember, conclude with this or the like form: 'For these and all other my sins, which I cannot at present recall to my remembrance, I am heartily sorry, purpose amendment for the future, and most humbly ask pardon of God, and penance and absolution of you, my ghostly father. Therefore, I beseech the blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you, my father, to pray to the Lord our God for me.'"

It is the priest's duty to probe the penitent's conscience and memory, and make him—more commonly her—disclose any and every secret bound up with the confession. He has studied manuals containing inventories of possible sins brought down to the finest details, and knows what questions to ask. He may withhold absolution if he sees fit, and may impose any penance such as he deems to be prudent. If he absolves, he does it authoritatively as God's *alter ego*.

What is to be said of this requirement and practice?

(i) It depends upon a priestly theory of Apostolic Succession, which assumes that there is a specially-commissioned order of men to whom God

Con-
science
probed

The
Thread of
Theory

The People and the Priest

has delegated the right and power to receive all confessions of sin, to grant absolution or to withhold it, and from whom penitent souls are meekly and obediently to take judgment and the imposition of penance.

For an estimate of this assumption and claim, the reader must be referred to other chapters (iii. and xii.).

(ii) Confession has deep roots, but not in Scripture. It is easy to show that within the whole range of the New Testament the closest scrutiny will not discover a trace of the existence of the practice of confession in the primitive Christian Church, nor a sentence on which the practice can be based. Centuries, indeed, had elapsed ere the practice began to take shape.

“Confess your Faults” The only text advanced in its favour—“Confess your faults one to another”—has no bearing upon the matter whatever. Even if it had, the confession would require to be mutual—“one to another”: the position of the two persons is equal. Accepting this rule, one might say to the priest who quotes it, “So be it, father; let us take it in turn: I shall confess to you, if you will follow by confessing to me.” But, in truth, the text makes no reference to sins (to accept for the moment a common but imperfect distinction), but to wrongs which men do to one another. When they *have* injured one another they are required to

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make acknowledgment of such injuries, not only to God, but also to those who have suffered the injuries—to “confess their *faults*”—to the priest?—no, “one to another.” That this is the meaning is patent and unmistakable. Whatever may be said in favour of Confession, the Bible knows nothing of the practice.

It sets up human intermediaries between the soul and God—and all such barriers Christ broke down. At His death the veil of the Temple, shutting off the mercy seat, was rent.

The prime argument against the Confessional is that it is unscriptural. Christ knows nothing of it.

(iii) If there be any justification for the Confessional, it is to be found in the needs and cravings of human nature. It seems to answer to the demands which conscience makes for an opportunity to disburden itself, for a discreet confidant to share its oppressive secrets, for an experienced guide to give direction and advice.

The Cry
for a Con-
fidant.

At first an instinct of self-preservation urges a man to conceal the shame of his guilty conscience—to defy it—to bury it—to cover it with forced gaiety. But—unless the man succeeds in driving the evil action right into his hidden nature and deadens his spirit in doing so—he finds after a time that his stifling memory has become a maddening irritation, or, in his befogged bewilderment, he longs for a true man, a second con-

Cross
Currents

The People and the Priest

science, to help him out with his misbegotten secret ; and a second instinct makes the heart-sick man long to clutch a fellow-mortal and make him sharer of the haunting trouble. The lonely Karroo is not to be compared with the loneliness of the inner chambers of a mind where accusing spectres are confined.

One man, whose disconsolate lyric is on the lips of Christendom, declared, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed *old* through my moaning all the day long. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer."

Reflected
in Literature

Literature testifies to the universality of the craving for confession. According to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, Arthur Dimmesdale bore the memory of his secret misdeed gnawing daily at his heart, strove in vain to tear out the rooted sorrow by means of noble service, but found no sweet oblivion until, in the centre of the old town, on the spot where he had concealed his offence, he at last stood and flung forth his confession to men and God. When he had taken his fellowmen into his confidence, he stood—condemned and disgraced, no doubt—but happy !

Sin is an alien thing, a foreign element, against which the stomach of conscience "turns" in strong revulsion. The soul longs to cast it forth. No doubt the hardened veteran in an evil life can sin on and gaily sing and softly sleep as if

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nought were amiss. No avenging angels haunt his visions. But most people have not acquired the fatal power that marks the doom of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Most people, at any rate at times, crave a sympathetic, wise, and trusty comrade or adviser to whom they may unbosom all.

It is here, in this human craving, that the Confessional finds its strong hold upon average men.

Newman has expressed it in his own chaste, luminous language: "How many are the souls in distress, anxiety, or loneliness, whose one need is to find a being to whom they can pour out their feelings unheard by the world? Tell them out they must; they cannot tell them out to those whom they see every hour; and they want to tell them out, yet be as if they be not told; they wish to tell them to one who is strong enough to bear them, yet not too strong to despise them; they wish to tell them to one who can at once advise and can sympathise with them; they wish to relieve themselves of a load, to gain a solace, to receive the assurance that there is one who thinks of them, and one to whom in thought they can recur, to whom they can betake themselves, if necessary, from time to time, while they are in the world. How many a Protestant's heart would leap at the news of such a benefit, putting aside all distinct ideas of a sacramental ordinance, or of a

Newman's
Idyll of
Confession

The People and the Priest

grant of pardon and the conveyance of grace! If there is a heavenly idea in the Catholic Church, looking at it simply as an idea, surely, next after the Blessed Sacrament, Confession is such."

It is this instinctive craving which the Church of Rome—and in some measure the Anglo-Catholic Church—has seized and fostered, and upon which it has often traded.

A Vital Distinction

But alert minds will clearly observe the distinction between two things that differ: between, on the one hand, voluntary confidences which an uneasy heart may bring to a wise, considerate confidant, and, on the other hand, regular confession of all sins to an official priesthood, as the agency through which the divine forgiveness of sins is to be obtained. One must distinguish the frank, sacred disclosure of distresses of mind and sorrows of soul which one may make to a trusty and sympathetic friend from the requirement which the law of the Roman Church imposes on every devout Catholic, and the recommendation which Anglo-Catholic priests urge upon their flocks, to utter to an order of priestly functionaries those confessions of sin which are due to God, to address these confessions to a mortal man, himself a sinner before God, as if he were God's plenipotentiary, the only means of getting at God and procuring pardon.

The two things are different, not only in degree,

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but in kind : different in their *motif*, different in the mental attitude assumed by the penitent to the listener. The one is friendly consultation ; the other is submission of a soul's life to a mortal and erring man as if he were God or God's other-self. In the one case, the distraught heart finds healing salve in such sacred confidences only when it knows the character of the man who is asked to receive these secrets, and knows his qualifications for entering into the case and feeling the trouble as if it were his own. In the other case, the Confessional is a fixed and vital institution, through which man *must* or ought to transmit his confessions if he would reach God's ear. The act tends to harden into a duty and formality, in which event its healing virtue for the heart is not necessarily operative. To satisfy one's deep human craving for confidential sympathy and help, it will not do to go as one of a dozen who are confessing in turn to the same priest. I have it from the lips of one who led a monastic life for seven years that, as a rule, the priest dislikes the weary routine of average confessions. If such be the case, it does not provide the salve of sympathy which the Catholic seeks, but becomes a mechanical process for keeping in favour with God.

Newman's persuasive picture of the joys of self-disclosure to a wise confidant is no argument in favour of what is a different thing, the regular substitution of a man for God, and the addressing of

Con-
fession or
Consulta-
tion?

New-
man's
Bad
Logic

The People and the Priest

cries for divine forgiveness to the ear of a member of a caste. Newman's dream may be realised in *some* priestly confessions, when special troubles drive the individual to a good and large-hearted priest. But his dream is very far from being realised in Confession as a regular institution and imperative law.

There are, no doubt, crises in life when it may be wise to spread out one's baffling tangle of distress before a man or woman of superior wisdom and big heart, one who is kindred in sympathies and able to appreciate the point of trouble—and for this purpose *any* kind, discreet Christian man or woman will do as well as a priest, generally much better. The medical man is often a father-confessor, especially in cases of secret sins of a social sort. When it is a spiritual malady that seeks relief, it is the man of high moral tone and kindly character who is chosen, no matter whether he is one of an "order" or not.

The
Priestly
Office of
all good
Men

"In the dangers of our body we consult a physician, in the intricacies of our estate we advise with the lawyer, and in the care of our immortal souls why do we not advise with our spiritual physicians?" (Dean Comber). But bodily ailments are the proper matter for the doctor, legal difficulties for the solicitor, while, for the spirit's distresses, with whom have we to do save the Divine Spirit, our Father? If only occasional con-

Confession and Ghostly Counsel

sultation with a religious adviser were enjoined, we should be content and glad. But it is a wholly different case when, not friendly consultation and advice, but the confession of all sin, to be followed by the priest's needful absolution, is imposed.

That a priest *may* be fit to serve this purpose there is neither need nor wish to deny,—not in virtue, however, of his priestly caste but of whatever degree of humane and Christian spirit he may possess. It may even be said that priestly professionalism warps and disqualifies, and hardens into formality.

Every Christian of wise, kindly, Christly character is, or may be, God's true priest, interpreting the needs and reading the case of the weary seeker after rest, assisting his better nature to rise and utter itself to God, and disentangling the threads of truth and duty from the meshes of his life.

XIV

The Benefit of Confessing

For
Better
or for
Worse?

WHAT is the profit of Confession? Having considered the basis on which it rests, we must ask what good it does. On our Lord's authority, the final test of anything is its fruits.

Test it in practice.

Is habitual Confession a power for good? Roman and Anglican Catholics think it is. It might *a priori* be supposed to deliver men from the concealment of their sins or from the temptation to excuse them easily. There have been instances in which crimes have been detected—but must not be disclosed—through the Confessional. And in some directions it may at times serve a useful purpose. But if it be taken as a whole and as an enforced practice and regular institution, it is not, as Catholics claim, the safeguard of morality and best means of cleansing conscience.

Observe the effects of habitual confession upon the individual.

The Benefit of Confessing

It reduces confession of sin to an inventory of specific misdeeds, a list of concrete offences against concrete laws. It tends to externalise what ought to be the most spiritual and whole-souled act of intercourse between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit. It becomes an office or function too outward and mechanical to serve the deepest needs of the soul. I may accuse myself of certain specific offences against specific commandments. The priest may help me by putting questions and going through a list of possible sins that he has got up from the study of manuals in the use of which he has been trained. But my soul has conscience of deep, indescribable sinfulness, of regrets and imperfections which I could never hope or profess to express in sentences to an outward ear, but which I can unfold like a spread letter in open, direct, spiritual disclosure without language before the great Over-Heart. For this unveiling of the soul, its state and inmost motives and desires, before the all-seeing eye of the Father in heaven the Confessional substitutes a statement of misdeeds made to a faulty and limited fellow-mortal.

It is not good for a soul to lean on external aid **A Crutch** in this fashion, to hang on another man's judgment and will. Browning is a true interpreter of Christianity in perceiving that the use of life is to draw out and develop the individual's powers, to

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wake his soul and enable him to see truth with his own eyes, to endow him with "fitness" by evoking his latent possibilities. This development of the soul and its own perceptions is retarded and crippled when one takes one's law, orders, and truth from another's lips and not directly from the divine illumination of the Spirit.

Scrutiny
and In-
sight

It, moreover, lowers one's sense of a Divine Hearer of Confession, setting, as it does set, a fallible man in the place of God, inducing the suppliant to be content if he manage to satisfy the test of the priest and squeeze through the human ordeal. Whatever the ideal of such a man as Newman may be, the actual fact is notorious and well-proved—that the institution of the Confessional leads men insensibly to treat sin lightly, as a human error which can be set right by a mortal man. A good and earnest priest may try to evoke a contrite confession; but it is in the very nature of the institution and in the nature of average humanity that, when men have to deal with a mere man who cannot penetrate their secret thoughts, they will find it a very convenient facility for getting out of their straits without adequate sense of guilt and shame and without real spiritual change of heart.

How
often?

See also into what ruts this mechanical regulation runs. A devout Catholic is expected to make his Confession to the priest before receiving

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the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ ; and in order to remain a good Roman Catholic he must confess and communicate once a year. Once a year will do. That might serve well enough if it were only a friendly religious consultation, but it is the process necessary for forgiveness. He may allow his sins of all sorts to accumulate and lie on memory and conscience for twelve months at a time, but not longer. It is an astonishing undertaking—to recount the sins of a twelvemonth at one interview ! The sins of a single day are sufficient for the tale of the night's confession which many of us make, and to sum up the offences of a year or of a month would be an impossibility, or, if attempted, a superficial pretence. But perhaps we are only proving that we are worse than other men !

Whether it be a year or a week, you cannot as a Roman Catholic clean up your conscience in the interval by turning to God direct. You must carry your sins until you confess them to the proper plenipotentiary. You would not wear soiled linen so long as that ; but what could you do—let the reader forgive the freedom of the illustration—if the County Council were to say, “ It is our business to secure a water supply ; we have special authority in matters of sanitation ; and you must not use rain-water or spring-water for your ablutions ; you must carry your stains

The
Daily
Bath

The People and the Priest

till you come to our municipal baths and wash-houses." Such a regulation would not be "broad-based upon the people's will." Many of us think that any clean water is efficient, and that what God opens for us in the over-arching sky and the cool, gushing spring we are free to use. Catholic authorities, however, say that a monopoly of the cleansing grace of God has been entrusted to them; and that, no matter how humbly you may confess and cry to God, you cannot rid your conscience of a single stain till you go to the priest, strip yourself before him, and — *salva reverentia* — get him to play his ecclesiastical disinfectants, like one turning on a municipal hose, upon you.

Dark Secrets

The Confessional, moreover, is liable to be hurtful by laying constant stress on the dark and evil elements in life and by keeping the mind's eye on sins and vices. People are not made *good* by the perpetual contemplation and rehearsal of *bad* things, by morbid self-anatomy and humiliating self-accusation: this is the "bleeding system" of medical treatment. The Christian method is to lift up the beauty and the virtues of Christ's character before the eye and to fill the mind with good things so that it may lose interest in evil.

Sug- gested Evil

One who had gone to Confession regularly for many years told me that the priest, in his desire to

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rifle the secrets of the suppliant's life, often succeeds only in suggesting bad thoughts and vicious inclinations to those who otherwise would never dream of such things. One can easily believe it, for I can verify the fact that, in scanning the manuals intended for the guidance of the priest in the Confessional, one's lower and worse inclinations are roused. If some of these books, written in Latin, were published in English, they would soon be brought under the eagle eye of the law courts. Even the manual which assists the Anglo-Catholic priests in receiving Confessions tends, by its detailed lists of sins and vices, to soil the soul. Archbishop Tait described it as "a disgrace to the community."

One cannot write freely upon this aspect of the **Modesty** subject. But it is easy to see how modesty must be beaten down ere sinners can bring themselves to put in words, in the hearing of a man, what they might in dumb shame, in silent self-abasement, avow to the All-knowing Spirit of God by setting themselves, without using a word, in the Divine light. It is easy to see what subtle perils lurk in the place where every sin and temptation must be told. There is no need to collect the scandals of past times or to prove again that the Confessional was in former centuries the hot-bed of vice. It is gratifying to believe that now, in this country, these evils are much rarer than of old, owing to the

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search-light of public opinion and a healthy Protestant environment.

Sex in
Con-
fession

But, leaving scandals quite out of view, it is not difficult to imagine how large a part the element of sex plays in the attraction of the Confessional. Michelet showed how even such pure and honourable Confessors as Bossuet and Fénelon were made the recipients of warm devotions and delicate confidences which, though professedly offered in the form of religion, were largely tingured with subtle sex affections. Even in the case of men like these, whose names are untarnished, observers see the emotional perils attaching to such confidential relations; and, as Bossuet said, referring to the delicate troubles which Sister Cornuau's imagination kept fresh, "that it was necessary, when one was obliged to speak of and listen to sufferings of this sort, to be standing with only the point of the foot upon the earth." There are Protestant ministers who have been within sight of the same subtle perils. It is bad for the priest, keeping him down in the unhealthy places and even the sewers of life. And it is bad for the people, invading the sanctities of that temple of the soul into which no creature should enter save God alone.

Fénelon
and
Bossuet

"If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in their heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow

The Benefit of Confessing

To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge." (MRS BROWNING.)

The Confessional puts tremendous power in the priest's hands. It makes him master of his subjects' lives because master of their secrets. You cannot habitually surrender all your inner life to another man without losing your freedom and independence. You feel that you are permanently in his hands and power, and that you belong to him. He may be a good man and use his knowledge considerately; and he may never divulge what he knows; but he has you in his grasp. It is not because the human nature of priests is essentially different from the human nature of Protestants; it is in the very nature of the system, that an order of men who are charged with such terrible power over the consciences and eternal welfare of their people must be extremely liable, if not quite certain, to dominate and tyrannise over such people. It is an office carrying powers which no man, priest or monarch, should be called upon or permitted to hold.

The
Priest's
Power

Hence the Confessional in its social effects is a danger to the state and to the home. The safeguard of morality, indeed! Priest-ridden countries have a different tale to tell.

The People and the Priest

Masters of Social Destiny

In countries where the Roman Church holds the field and where the religious system may be seen freely working out its true results, the priests direct the men who direct the state (at least in so far as they are true Catholics), and possess themselves of the secrets of statesmen and leaders of the people. Hence come intrigues, secret "Star Chambers," and government by unseen priestly powers. It is from this cause that, wherever Rome has unchecked sway, the priest-ridden people are held in subjection and the national government is insecure.

The priest is equally a source of danger to the home.¹ The Confessional means that the sanctities of domestic life, the secrets between parents and children, husband and wife, must be laid bare to a celibate outsider. Between the closest and dearest comes another ghostly presence. What is said another may hear. What is done another may see. The priest enters as a disturbing influence between those whom God has joined together.

Whatever good purpose may be served by voluntary confession, made under exceptional circumstances to a trusted confidant, the Confessional, as a regular and obligatory institution, is a desecrating intrusion, an invasion of both the privacies of home and the sacred life of the heart. Yet earnest Christian people are gradually pressing it into the service of religion once more

¹ Cf. Michelet's book, already quoted.

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in this land, forgetting the lesson which history has taught.

Confession *is* good for the soul. Only by casting forth the evil consciousness can men be released from sin's enslaving defilement. Out with it they must, if they would be saved from its blight. But to none save God alone ought they to expose all their being. It is Christ who is the heart's interpreter, the "one Mediator between God and men." Human to "the red ripe of His heart," He satisfies our yearning for a living sympathy. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Good for
the Soul

XV

The Mystery of the Body and Blood

The Holy Place

AT the Lord's Table we find the most central as well as the best-authenticated part of Christianity. It means and represents all that He taught and suffered, the sum of the Gospel. To all Christians hallowed are the memories and rich the spiritual experiences gathered around the service of Holy Communion. In presence of the very symbols of reconciling love the sounds of the wrangling voices of Christian brethren disputing its significance offend one's devout sensibilities as a desecration. Yet it is ever the subject of most sacred and profound significance that arouses the sharpest conflicts.

When the Catholic Churches, not content with observing the sacrament in their own way, pronounce it absolutely invalid and vain as observed by all other Churches, we are compelled to state the whole case so as to make good our claim of right. He who has called us to spread the truth has sent a sword.

Being able to share some of the ideas distinct.

Mystery of the Body and Blood

tive of the Communion as observed in Catholic Churches, I aim at seeing truth as well as error where it appears.

The mixed chalice, for example, contended for by High Ritualists and employed universally among Roman Catholics, is historically correct. To lay *stress*, indeed, on the presence of water in the wine as though thereby the sacrament were made more valid and efficacious is to magnify a mere accident of the case and "tithe anise and cummin." The attempt is made to associate the mixed chalice with the water and the blood which flowed from the side of the Crucified; but that association is imposed upon it by modern theorists.

The Paschal bowl among the Jews was always filled with water mixed with the wine. The wine-bowl, *κρατήρ*, was a mixing vessel. Nobody thought of drinking wine otherwise, any more than we should now take syrup or lime-juice without water. But then if we *must* have water mixed with the Communion wine, we must have fish along with an unleavened cake, and must likewise have a sop, and must sit on couches or mats. To insist on these accidentals of the Pass-over would be to become finicky scribes. The two distinctive elements remain, bread and wine; yet who dare say that no other element might *ever* be used instead? One thing alone is needful: we shall see what.

The People and the Priest

What is to be said, likewise, for Early and Fasting Communion, for Non - communicating attendance, for the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood, and for the Mass? These must be touched on briefly, after we have sought out the meaning of the sacrament.

In the present chapter we have chiefly in view the Anglo-Catholic doctrine.

The real
Presence
"Lo
There"

Is the presence of Christ at His Table *objective*, in the material object which the eye sees? Is He *there*, yonder, to be conveyed to the communicant through the channel of the edible substance? Yes, says the Anglo-Catholic; "the consecrated bread and wine are the medium for the communication of these blessings."¹ "The term *Real Presence* signifies the presence of a reality. This reality is the Body and Blood of Christ, present in the sacrament under the forms of bread and wine."² Contrary to the Roman doctrine, the bread remains bread, the wine, wine; but in a mysterious manner they contain within them the actual Body and Blood of Christ. "This is my body"; "This is my blood"; we are to take these words as they stand, not in a carnal but in a spiritual sense. We shall see immediately what the passage means. But, meanwhile, is the sense in which they are thus understood as really spiritual as it is intended to be?

¹ Sadler's *Church Doctrine Bible Truth*, p. 170.

² *The Catholic Religion*, p. 274.

Mystery of the Body and Blood

Why do candles appear on the altar in the morning and at mid-day? They are a trace of the original practice of holding the Communion in the evening.¹ That our Lord's Supper was an evening meal is universally admitted. Like the *Nachtmaal* or night-meal of the Boers, *δειπνον* was a supper. Catholics never use the expression "Lord's Supper," since the words would clash with the requirement they make that it shall be kept early in the day. Why, not only depart from Christ's own practice, but strenuously condemn evening Communion as "very wrong"? Done by the Master, why is it wrong in His disciples? Why do Ritualists, in Canon Eyton's words, "refuse to 'see' those who present themselves at the mid-day service to receive the Holy Communion?" Because they must receive it fasting. The Jews fasted before the Passover. (But Christ had partaken of the Passover food when He instituted the Holy Supper, we might say, and it was only once a year.) What the Jews did is enforced; the hour at which our Lord observed Communion does not matter for us! (Nor, indeed, does the hour matter for *us*, whether noon or midnight; but the reason for the change does matter; and mark the course of reasoning.) Early Communion has been the general custom since the first centuries. Church

Candles
and
Evening
Com-
munion

The
Fasting
Passover

¹ Perhaps also of the services held in the dark Catacombs.

The People and the Priest

custom must be observed; Christ's practice in the matter must yield to *that*!

The Jewish fast is transferred to the Christian sacrament. But it is too much to ask the Christian to fast as long as the Jew—twenty-four hours—and then break his fast in the evening with the sacred bread. The Jewish rule is imposed, but is cut down and accommodated to the Christian; and the supper is taken before breakfast. Thus he saves his soul and his bacon at the same time! How lamentably like the quibbles of the Jewish scribes!

Fasting
Com-
munion

Fasting Communion, however, has its governing reason, not only in the custom of the Church and of the Jews, but in the idea—at bottom a Manichæan idea—that consecrated bread ought to be taken first, and should not “meet the matter of ordinary food in the process of physical digestion.”

Materialised thus into a consideration of the commingling of consecrated and unconsecrated bread, is it really so spiritual a view of the act as Sacramentarians sincerely believe it to be? Is it a spiritual view to strain imagination in conceiving Christ, both in Body and Blood, to be present in the material baked flour, in a piece of bread—the size, wafer or crumb, matters not—that is handled and eaten? Desiring to respect the sacred things of all good men, I am yet compelled to put the question, Is Christ, who was embodied in flesh,

The
Medium
of Grace

Mystery of the Body and Blood

embodied in every piece of consecrated bread? As this bread is said (see above) to be the "medium for the communicating of these blessings" of His grace, does His grace pass into the communicant through his lips and enter his higher nature mystically by way of physical processes and channels?

I know that it is not the material bread that is either supposed to be changed in its nature or believed to be itself corporeally the vitalising quantity: it is the Christ received by faith. Certainly the devout partake of the *spiritual* Christ in spite of confusing externalisations. But Christ is said to be enveloped in the bread, to be conveyed through the medium of the bread; the avenues through which the spiritual grace is transmitted are therefore physical avenues; and thereby the conception of grace and the Divine operation is materialised.

Query: Can material substances thus touch the spirit? Meat and drink infuse physical vitality; can they carry spiritual grace? But it is said that we are irreverent when we press terms thus; that the Presence is mystical, the process a mystery not subject to the human comprehension; that the grace is received by devout faith. Mystical indeed is the communion of Spirit with spirit, because unseen. But spiritual mysteries must be consistent with the essential laws of spiritual action, and must not irrationally contradict our ruling spiritual

The Plea
of "Mys-
tery"

The People and the Priest

instincts nor offend intelligence by their incongruity.

It will not do always to drag in the plea of "mystery" to cover the retreat of theorists, whether Calvinists or Catholics, from the inevitable difficulties which their unintelligible theories have created. That plea may cover the statements of Christ; but the same privilege of "mystery" cannot be claimed for theories intended to interpret those statements, especially when there are other interpretations which are at least as legitimate and more intelligible.

The Real Presence

A Real Presence there is in the sacrament of Communion; but does the reality of the Divine Presence lie within the material elements, or in the hearts of the communicants alone? Remembering the constant teaching of our Lord to the effect that the spiritual kingdom and realities were inward, is it not more consistent with His principles to suppose that the *real* Presence is the direct contact of the Spirit of Christ with the devout spirit of the communicant who is fed with spiritual thoughts, love, and power? Can the Spirit not *get at* the human spirit except through the media of physical elements?

"Figurative"?

This is a merely "figurative" interpretation of the Divine Presence, says Mr Sadler. But which is the figure—the objective symbol or the spiritual fact? The *real* is the spiritual. And if we have

Mystery of the Body and Blood

the real powers of holy things upon us by the Spirit of Christ in our hearts as we communicate, we are content to have the reality. And will any man dare to say that we cannot have the Spirit's Presence unless the bread has been consecrated by a member of a priestly caste?

Non-communicating attendance is now much in favour. It appears an inconsistent but welcome confession that the virtue of the sacrament can be received without the eating of the consecrated bread.¹

But we must take Christ's words as they stand, we are told; and He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." It is claimed that He is referring to the act of partaking of His Body and Blood in the sacrament. But these words were spoken long before He instituted the sacrament (John vi.). Must we, in any case, take them literally as they stand? Literally "eat His flesh and drink His blood"? No, Anglo-Catholics do not take them literally, but mystically. The very grossness of the metaphor of flesh and blood should be enough to shew that He did not mean

Non-Communicating Attendance

"Except ye eat the Flesh"

¹ "If a man by any just impediment do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, the Church shall instruct him that [if he fulfil the moral conditions he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."—Prayer Book, taken from early rubric.

The People and the Priest

anything material. And when the Jews took Him literally and asked how they could eat His flesh and blood, He repudiated their materialised idea by declaring, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."¹ His concrete terms of flesh and blood are meant to teach in bold metaphor that men must make His very self their Divine nutriment,² the very life and marrow of their life, must absorb His mind, incorporate His character, truth, and power into their being, as food is incorporated into the body. It is just what St Paul meant when he said, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."

Oriental Poetry

Orientalists speaking to Orientals regularly clad their meaning in concrete imagery, as their descendants do to-day. The Bible, like all Semitic writings, abounds in figurative language and exuberant colour, which in our prosaic North-lands is debased if taken literally. And Christ, as an Oriental teaching Orientals, made it His constant practice to talk in parables, vivid figures, concrete imagery. Catholics, Anglican and Roman, seem to forget this elucidating fact.

¹ See how Mr Sadler puts a vague gloss on these plain words and spirits them away, p. 157.

² Cf. *Ecclesiasticus*: "They that eat me [Wisdom] shall still hunger for me; they that drink me shall thirst for me."

Mystery of the Body and Blood

But did not Christ settle the matter when He said, in instituting the sacrament: "This is my body; this is my blood"? According to Anglican Catholics, He meant that after His consecrating prayer the bread *was* His body, and not merely a symbol of it. We are not to etherealise the words away, but take them as they are. If that be so, then the Roman Catholic has the right of it, for the Anglo-Catholic says that the bread is still bread and only contains Christ under its natural form, while the Roman Catholic, as we shall see, takes the terms absolutely.

The old Paschal formula, still used by the Jews in celebrating the Passover, begins—"This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate when they came out of Egypt." Christ simply carries over the old familiar phraseology to the new sacrament, saying, "This is my body." Did the presiding Jew mean, when repeating the formula, that the cake in his hand literally "is the bread which our fathers ate"? "Is" was the condensed equivalent of "represents." When Christ takes over the same term, it bears the same meaning. When the disciples were familiar with the use of it in this sense in the Passover, could they think He meant it literally as applied to His body and blood?

Christ said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." One is ashamed to have to put the question, Did

"This is
My
Body"

The
Paschal
Formula

Christ's
Imagery

The People and the Priest

He mean that He was in actual substance a vine? "I am the door:" are we to take that bald statement figuratively, and then be told that it is dreadful error to fly to a figurative refinement of the similar statement, "This is my body," and take "is" for "represents" His body? Alas, for the childish, impossible literalism that requires this treatment of the subject! In distributing the bread and the wine, was He at the same moment handling His own body and blood, having re-incarnated Himself in these elements? "But it is a great mystery." No, a wholly gratuitous and fatuous invention, manufactured by priestly interpreters and imposed on Christ's own words! Alas, the sorrows of the Founders of religions, of Christ and of Buddha!

Spilt Blood

The superstitious way in which Catholics view the sacrament is seen in their nervous fear lest a drop of the sacred liquid be spilt and so desecrated. Hence an Anglo-Catholic book (*Directorium Anglicanum*) directs, "If, by negligence, any of the blood be spilled upon the table fixed to the floor, the priest must take up the drop with his tongue, and the place of the table must be scraped, and the shavings must be burned with fire, and the ashes reserved with the relics beside the altar; and he to whom this has befallen must do penance for forty days." It sounds as if it were a bit out of Leviticus,—only more so!—as if Judaism were still

Mystery of the Body and Blood

with us in its most technical form and Christ had never come to spiritualise religion. Surely we have here the modern wing of the "Judaising" party condemned in the New Testament. We see from such fears and regulations how the Sacramentarian view is rooted in superstition.

The communicant is told that he is never to speak of the "bread and wine," but always of the "Body and Blood."¹ Yet it was the Lord Himself who, after He had distributed the elements, spoke of "this *fruit of the vine*." In St Paul's account, Christ says: "As often as ye eat this *bread*. . . . Whosoever shall eat this *bread* unworthily," etc. And the author of the Acts (ii. 42) calls the sacrament "the breaking of *bread*."

Of the "body and blood" of Christ we do indeed eat and drink. The "body" of a thing was the Hebrew expression for the very essence of the thing. "The 'body of heaven' (Exod. xxiv. 10) meant the very heaven, the 'body of the day' (Gen. xvii. 23) meant the self-same day, the body of a man meant his full strength."²

What the "body" of Christ was it is easy to see, namely, the very substance of His person, His teaching, work, and character, and their spiritual strength consumed by faith and communion.

"The blood is the life," we read in Leviticus; The
Blood
indeed

¹ *The Catholic Religion*.

² Cf. Dean Stanley's *Christian Institutions*, p. 107.

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and Christ's blood shed is the token and proof of His life given up for men, the seal of His love and His sacrifice, and the attestation of His Gospel and cleansing grace. It is the very life-blood of His moral and spiritual being that we drink in, the love which *is God*. This is not mere "figure," but the ultimate reality.

These sacramentarian doctrines can only be interpreted charitably as the exaggerated language used to express emphatically the positive presence of Christ in Communion, and in superstitious ages hardened into the bald *letter* of the spiritual truth. "The letter killeth ; the spirit giveth life." Happily many devout Catholics grasp the spirit of the sacrament in spite of the materialising letter of the nominal doctrine.

XVI

The Mystery Deepens

IN the Roman Missal there occurs a remarkable passage which hints at a broader view of the Holy Sacrament than is professed by Catholics. It is the provision that where the sacrament cannot be obtained it is enough if you have genuine faith and a good desire: only believe and you have eaten. ("Sufficit vera fides et bona voluntas. Tantum crede et manducasti.") To eat the actual Body and Blood of Christ, it is thus allowed, is not an absolutely indispensable necessity to the reception of grace through the sacrament. In certain cases, the spiritual virtue of the sacrament is obtained apart from the consecrated bread if the devout soul has faith and a good intention. Would that the principle of this spiritual proviso were allowed larger scope in the current teaching of modern Catholics! Unhappily it is only a trace of a long-past vision of the truth now lost.

A welcome
Proviso

After the act of consecration the bread and wine retain their previous colour, form, and taste,

The People and the Priest

but they are in substance the real Body and Blood of Christ, together with His soul and Divinity. He is there—the whole of Him, the Divine as well as the human, the God as well as the man. Nay, He is whole and entire in the bread separately and in the wine separately. Nay, He is whole and entire—it is the authoritative pronouncement of the Roman Church—in every separate *particle* broken from the bread (His flesh); He is whole and entire in every separate *drop* of the wine (His blood).

Christ
"Ossa et
Nervos"

"Are bones, sinews (*ossa et nervos*), and whatsoever things pertain to the perfection of man really present here [in the Body and Blood] together with the Godhead?" The Catechism of the Council of Trent asks the question, and answers, Yes.

This is the infallible statement which every man must believe if he would be saved. The priest, by his mystic alchemy, can transmute a drop of wine into the incarnate Deity; can manufacture Christ; can, as one of their great spokesmen put it, "create the Creator."

Better
than their
Creed

Knowing how widely a nominal creed often differs from the actual thoughts of its professors, one is sure that spiritually-minded Catholics do not realisingly conceive the Divine Presence thus carnally; that on the contrary their penetrative insight perceives the spiritual reality; or, if not, that the irrational wonder is blindly accepted

The Mystery Deepens

as part of the bulk of the Catholic system, left in its shrouded place of honour and acknowledged with an act of obeisance. Probably the doctrine arose out of the emphatic statement of the actual presence of Christ in the sacrament, a statement encrusted in this gross form.

But if we were compelled to take the doctrine literally, we should also be compelled to pronounce it a repulsive degradation of Christ. Thus viewed, it is a remnant of the ancient cannibal feast.

“Hocus-pocus”—is it any wonder that the act of priestly transmutation was thus named by the scoffing vulgar,—the Latin for “This is my body,” “Hoc est corpus meum,” being corrupted into “hocus-pocus,” the very name for a magical incantation?

We are not to use reason upon such a mystery? We are to take it on faith? But is that faith which closes its eyes and swallows monstrosities which are imposed, not by the Founder of Christianity, but by ecclesiastics long centuries after His time?

Newman says,¹ “Why may it not be? What do we know of matter and the substance under its appearance?” But our ignorance of the ultimate reality behind the appearance of matter is scarcely an argument for declaring as a known fact that a certain particle of matter (bread) contains the con-

¹ See the similar plea of the Anglo-Catholic, Mr Sadler, p. 164.

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scious soul and the flesh of Jesus Christ. Whatever matter may be in essence, it is *not*, in certain consecrated particles, the Divine Christ. *If it were*, strange that He should remain dumb and dead as stone! Again I cry—O the sorrows of the founders of religion!

Cicero Even ancient pagans had risen above such gross conceptions. Cicero wrote (in his *De Naturâ Deorum*), "When we call fruits Ceres and wine Bacchus, we employ a common usage of language. But who, think you, could be so mad as to believe that that which is eaten is a deity?" If Cicero were here to-day, he would find millions of Christians who are bound to believe it. The philosopher Averroes was entitled to exclaim, "Since these Christians devour the god they worship, let my soul be with the philosophers!"

A certain respect is due to anything that is sacred in the eyes of sincere fellow-men, and one hesitates to handle the Mass as it deserves. I would be disposed to treat respectfully even a Buddhist's idol or prayer-wheel. It is difficult, however, to spare a dogma which so flatly contravenes the spirit and the very words of the Founder of Christianity, contained in the sacred book from which the religion is taken.

Intoxi-
cating
Grace

The bread may grow mouldy and corrupt; yet it is the entire Christ. The wine may become sour; it may even intoxicate—for some of the

The Mystery Deepens

Corinthians became intoxicated by the Communion wine ; yet that which turns sour and that which intoxicates are both the body and soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Roman casuists even speak of the possibility of vermin eating it. Vermin may eat the body and soul of Jesus Christ. Can human infatuation sink to a lower depth?

But Roman Catholics do not shrink from pushing the doctrine to its logical issues. As the Divine Being is present in the wafer, it must be adored by the devout—not only respected, but adored with all the profound adoration which is due to God. When the Sanctus bell calls the people's attention to the completion of the act of consecration, all must bow in deepest worship : God is there, embodied. And Anglo-Catholics are introducing a similar act of adoration.

When charged with an act of idolatry, they reply that it would be an act of idolatry if the wafer were only bread, but that it is no idolatry when Divinity is there. O poor, impotent piece of Divinity ! weaker even than the idol which Isaiah handled so scathingly, having neither ears, nor eyes, nor hands ! For all the soul and Divinity it contains, it cannot defend itself, nor defy corruption, nor put to flight a timid mouse in search of food. Well might John Knox say : “ A bold puissant mouse ! but a feeble and miserable god ! Yet would I ask a question. Whether hath the priest or

The
Wafer
Adored

The People and the Priest

the mouse the greater power? By his word it is made a god: by her teeth it ceases to be a god!"

Christ Lost

Catholics do not hesitate to drive their doctrine to still further logical conclusions. A drop of the wine spilt is Christ lost, and an awful sacrilege, involving serious penance as a penalty. One who led a monastic life as a Roman Catholic for seven years—one whom I know to be true and fair to the forsaken faith—who fled the Convent, but has since returned, in despair, to monastic walls—told me more than once how, having on one occasion opened her lips to allow the priest to put the wafer on her tongue (for the communicant must not touch it with a finger), an unfortunate sneeze projected a particle of the bread on the person of the communicant, who in mortal terror had to wait till the priest took it up and saved it. She had thereafter to wash the spot with great care and do penance. Such cases are taken, not from past ages and discarded practices, but from living Romanism and Anglicanism to-day. Do they not reveal to the undeceived a mass of benumbing superstition?

It is the fear lest one drop of the sacred wine be spilt, as already stated, which chiefly induces the Roman Catholics to withhold the wine from the laity, and from the priests who are not officiating, who receive in one kind only, leaving the cup

The Mystery Deepens

to the officiating priest. They make no attempt to deny that the wine as well as the bread was distributed by Christ—"Drink ye all of it"—and that the Apostles (as stated in 1 Cor. xi.) gave both elements to the Christian laity; but the Infallible Church has authority to overrule and change the primitive custom. What of that? The Church that can transubstantiate bread into Christ's entire being can repeal Christ's example.

The needful answer to these views has already been given in dealing with the Anglo-Catholic teaching, and to it the reader is referred.

It is told of George Sand that, "when on the point of receiving a first Communion in the years which followed the first Revolution, she was overwhelmed by the distracting and perplexing thoughts suggested by all the doubts which raged on the subject, but was restored to calm by fixing the mind on the one original scene from which the Christian Eucharist has sprung." Well for us if we do the same.

As we read the Gospel story of Christ's institution of this sacrament, it strikes us as an exquisitely pathetic and beautifully simple thing. The air of the upper chamber is full of farewell sadness. About to leave his disciples, Christ puts into their hands a perpetual memento of Him, and pledges Himself to be with them always in the person of His Holy Spirit. That which had hitherto been

Why
"in One
Kind?"

George
Sand

In Me-
moriam

The People and the Priest

the memorial of the Passover in Egypt and the chosen people's emancipation is henceforth to be associated in sacred thought with their Lord, the Lamb of God, and the Bread of believing souls. All who call themselves Christians are to meet around the Supper Table, as the family board of the Christian Brotherhood, and, taking bread and wine, and giving thanks, they are to remember Him, and shew forth His death, till He come.

It is simplicity itself, potent with the spell of pathos, and love, and holy memories, and uplifting hopes. He is made known unto us in the breaking of bread. "Did not our hearts burn while He talked with us by the way?"

XVII

The Sacrifice of the Mass

IS there a "Sacrifice of the Body and Blood" of Christ, or Mass, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Anglo-Catholics say that it *is* a sacrifice to God, in which Christ is ever and again offered up as an oblation to God in the name and on the behalf of the communicant. One wonders where ground for this view is found in Scripture, and one wonders still more when one learns that it is found in the words which seem to mean the very opposite, namely, "This do in remembrance of Me." "Do" is taken as the term for the act of "offering" a sacrifice among Jews, and "in remembrance" as meaning a reminder or a memorial *offered to God*—in short, the sacrifice of Christ repeated, not in the actuality of crucifixion, but as a memorial offering, Christ's oblation mystically reproduced and represented.¹ This sacrifice has

The Re-
peated
Sacrifice

¹ "The Mass," says an Anglican Bishop, "a good old English word which there is no harm in using." (*Why and Wherefore.*) No harm in the original word, but much harm in its use unless it is intended to express the sacerdotal Romish doctrine, which, as currently employed, it is understood to imply.

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virtue before God, and has virtue even for the dead.

**Masses
for the
Dead**

Masses for the dead are claimed as legitimate among advanced Anglo-Catholics. "Souls in the intermediate state are benefited by the offering of the Eucharistic Sacrifice."¹ And such Masses for the dead are actually being said in some Anglican Churches.

**"The
Unbloody
Sacrifice"**

According to Roman Catholic authorities, "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass does not differ in its essence from the sacrifice offered up upon Mount Calvary." So says *Catholic Belief*, under Papal imprimatur. While the *manner* of its presentation is different, the sacrifice itself is the same. Christ is being continually offered upon ten thousand altars as a sacrifice for sin, and it is the Catholic priest who offers Him up unto God. Hence the Communion Table is an altar. Hence too the dignity and gorgeous uniform of the priests who continually offer up the Holy Victim on man's behalf. This sacrifice has virtue not only to deliver the living from their sins, but also to hasten the dead out of the fires of Purgatory.

**Non-com-
municat-
ing
Attend-
ance**

Non-communicating attendance is coming into vogue in Anglican Churches, not intentionally as an admission that to eat the bread is not necessary for a true communion, but intentionally as being proper when the *sacrifice* of the Mass is

¹ *The Catholic Religion*, p. 270.

The Sacrifice of the Mass

being offered up by the priest on behalf of the people. At the momentous act of consecration the Sanctus bell is heard—significant of the semi-Romish idea of the service.

But what was the meaning of the Passover which Christ transmuted into the Lord's Supper? It was not a sacrifice, but a commemoration, in glad and grateful recollection of the deliverance of the Israelites. The same idea must govern the interpretation of the memorial feast that Christ puts in its place. Much is said about taking words in their plain sense. Take these authoritative words in their plain sense, "This do in remembrance of Me," and surely they are not endowed with any sacrificial idea, but mean simply a glad and grateful recollection of the deliverance of men from sin by the life and death of Christ who gave himself in sacrifice "once for all."

The very word Eucharist means only "giving thanks." And in the office for Communion, God is asked to accept "this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

Yes, "sacrifice" it is, but not as a something in the objective bread and wine, in the "Host" there visible before the altar. There is a truth dimly showing through even this superstitious Mass. The distinctive meaning of the Lord's Supper is the remembrance of Christ. But out of the remembrance of Him comes our return of praise

The
Passover

The
Truth in
the Mass

The People and the Priest

and self-devotion. We do indeed take up Christ's sacrifice and make it our own, and present ourselves unto God through Him; but not with our mental eyes on the "Host" or physical elements in the priest's hand, as though they held some mystic virtue and presence. It is in our hearts alone, in a purely spiritual act of faith, that we appropriate Christ and make Him the utterance of our offering to God, the mercy in which we trust.

We do offer a sacrifice, a further sacrifice—ourselves in self-devotion, in self-consecration. We present ourselves "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." There are priests at the Holy Sacrament, but not an official "Sacrificing Priesthood" who alone have power to make the service effective. The Passover was a family, domestic ceremony, not an "office" in the Temple. It was not one of the official Priesthood who presided, but the father or head of the house. In Christ's equivalent of the Passover, the same rule holds. The presiding head led the service, voicing the thanks of the company. If the modern priest were understood to be no more than the minister who voices the thanks and self-devotion and Christian trust of the people, all would be well, for a company of worshippers must—unless Quakers—have a spokesman. If that is all that is intended, greater care should be taken not to

The
Father as
Celebrant

Spokes-
man or
Priest?

The Sacrifice of the Mass

employ terms which convey the opposite meaning. But all Catholics claim that more is expressed by "priest" than the mouthpiece who voices the mind of the people. He is endowed with *power* as an intermediary. It is unfortunate that the word "priest," which comes from "prester," and from the New Testament "presbyter" ("elder"),—one who had no priestly functions at all,—should be now linked with "priest" as used in the Aaronic "order." The "presbyters" were absolutely distinct from Aaron's order of the sacrificing priesthood.

The New Testament knows nothing of such a "priest." As explained already, *never* is "*ιερεύς*," the word for "sacrificing priest," employed in the Gospels or Epistles in reference to any Christian officer or agent. Jewish worship was full of the idea of priesthood. All the more striking and significant is it that in the New Testament there is no mention of a "priest" in the Christian Church. There are evangelists, teachers, etc., but never a "priest."

No
"Priest"
in New
Testament

Why is this? Because Christ was the fulfilment of all these priestly types. He gathered in Himself all these priestly functions, and offered Himself unto God "*once for all*" as the final sacrifice unto God.

Every Christian is a priest to his fellow and to God. A mother ministering Christian truth to her

The People and the Priest

child and helping him to send up his prayers to God is a priest, not as an intermediary with official power, but as an interpreter. Any Christian who prays by the sick-bed of a friend who can neither think nor pray for very exhaustion, and so helps him to utter his soul to God, is a priest. Just in such fashion, though more extensively, are the clergy priests, interpreting souls and assisting them to utter themselves direct to God. The priesthood of human hearts ministering to other hearts is a universal and glorious ministry, ordained of God in the nature of things and not confined to an official class. Nor are such priests the indispensable channels through which alone devotion can pass. Devotion goes *direct*. To God also they are priests, offering sacrifices of worship.

The Veil
Rent

There are, however, no officials left by Christ to stand between the soul and God. The "veil of the Temple was rent" at His death; and for every devout Christian the way to God *direct* is open, without human intervention. Christ is the High Priest; and all devout hearts are priests unto God, as we read in Hebrews, priests to offer up, direct, their sacrifice of thanks, trust, and love, and the service of their strength and lives in the service of humanity.

XVIII

The Virgin's Veil

THE life of the Virgin Mary as presented in the New Testament is for the most part veiled from publicity. One feels that, in discussing her status in the thought and devotions of the Christian Church, one must, after the same fashion, deal with her case tenderly, reverently, and in becoming respect for the sacred experiences of her womanhood.

How does her status in the eyes of Catholics compare with the representations of her given in the New Testament?

First comes the vision of the angelic messengers saluting and congratulating her as "highly favoured" and "blessed among women"; then her womanly confidences with her cousin Elizabeth, and the brilliant outburst of prophetic vision in her "Magnificat." All the assurances she received from God, we can well imagine, must have been required to sustain her during the period of suspicion in which she found herself. What that suspicion meant for her may be faintly inferred

The
Portrait
in the
Gospels

The People and the Priest

from the lonely life and thoughts of Margaret Brandt in Reade's *Cloister and the Hearth*.

Then come the scene in Bethlehem, the presentation in the Temple, the hurried flight into Egypt. And now for thirty years nought is seen of Mother and Son in their retired and rustic life save the visit to Jerusalem when, at His coming of age, Jesus is lost and found among the Temple teachers.

But, whilst these long intervening years are screened from our eyes, sympathetic hearts can partly imagine what must have been Mary's secret wonderings and swelling anticipations as she nursed and tended the heaven-sent life; how devoutly she must have watched His growth and maturing mind; how wistfully and anxiously she must have seen Him leave the home-nest for His public career.

Her
Poetic
Vision

We see enough of her to discover a woman of large mind, lofty soul, spiritual insight, and gracious character. Her humble and modest spirit can soar into exalted realms of hope and rapture. If the "Magnificat" may be accepted as entirely her own immediate creation, it reveals a mind of exceptional powers, poetic gifts, and noble ideas. Moulded on the Song of Hannah and on the Psalms, it betrays how deeply her thoughts were saturated with the Messianic expectations and with the prophetic humanitarianism of the

The Virgin's Veil

Old Testament scriptures. Her soul appears aglow with passionate hopes of redemption for Israel, and burns with ardent desire for social righteousness. One can almost catch the notes of the Son's teaching in the Mother's song of Him who "hath scattered the proud, exalted them of low degree, filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich empty away."

But she must decrease, He must increase. Only three or four times do we meet with her again, and then only incidentally and for a moment. She is present at the wedding at Cana. Some time later she comes, along with His brothers and sisters, to the fringe of a crowd gathered round Him, asking to see Him. It is worth noting what His reply is when informed of their desire: "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother." Clearly He means to teach that, however sacred may be the ties of blood relationship, they are insignificant and ephemeral compared with the spiritual ties that are formed between kindred souls.

Then the black-letter day comes, when her motherly heart has to bow under the tragedy of her Beloved's appalling end; when, as she, the

The People and the Priest

Vanish-
ing in
Shadow

Mother, stands by her Son's cross, a sword pierces her soul; when in a swift farewell unutterably tender and sacred He commends her to John's guardian care and John to her affection. Instantly the veil falls and covers much that mere curiosity would be glad to discover; we see "none, save Jesus only."

We never meet with her again in the entire course of the New Testament writings, except in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is casually mentioned that she was among the many who gathered in Jerusalem after His departure. Not once is even her name introduced into the Epistles or the Apocalypse.

How, then, do the Gospels regard Mary? What impression do these glimpses give unprejudiced minds of her dignity and status in primitive Christianity?

The real
B. V.
Mary

Every Christian should be quick to accord her the honour given her in the Gospels. Protestants have too coldly passed her by. In some Protestant hymnals, "Jesus, Son of Mary"—the refrain in Dean Milman's hymn—has been changed, *e.g.*, into "Jesus, Son of David, hear,"—as if the introduction of the name of Mary implied that her aid was being invoked.

Highly favoured as the chosen handmaid of

The Virgin's Veil

the Lord, the Mother of the world's Messiah, all nations that know the story pronounce her blessed (or happy). High honour it is for a woman to be mother to even one of the world's master minds—to be Susanna Wesley, the saintly mother the spell of whose remarkable character and potent influence fell upon John and Charles Wesley. How much greater must be the respect of the universal Christian heart for her to whose first care was entrusted the Son of Man!

She stands forth, too, as the finest type of the purity of womanhood and the sanctity of motherhood. The true "glories of Mary" are these—to have worthily filled the honourable place of Nun or Mother? mother to Jesus Christ, and to represent the ideal of chaste womanhood and blessed motherhood. It is not virginity in the sense of celibacy of which she is the type. She has been misappropriated to glorify a nun's calling and to depreciate married life. Tradition, followed by mediæval painters who took their ideas from tradition, represented Joseph as an aged man. But the Church had a purpose to serve in inventing this unsupported assumption, namely, to give colour to their dogma — taught by Anglo - Catholics,¹ as by

¹ *The Catholic Religion*, p. 173. "When we realise that God Himself took flesh in Mary's womb, it is inconceivable that other children afterwards have been born of her." Whether true in *fact*, or not, why inconceivable?

The People and the Priest

Roman Catholics — that Mary, though taken under the guardian care of Joseph as her husband, was ever virgin, and mother of no second child. Whether Christ's "brothers and sisters" were or were not *her* children, there is no decisive evidence to show. But, in any case, she is the type of the sacredness of pure motherhood, not of virgin celibacy.

The Immaculate Conception

What can be said for the Roman dogma of the Immaculate Conception—not of Jesus but of Mary—the miracle that kept her free from the taint of human corruption while she was still unborn? A similar view is cherished, though not imposed, by Anglo-Catholics, thus expressed in the manual already quoted: "We may reverently believe that she was specially sanctified in the womb, and that she lived a life of spotless innocence." Admittedly the dogma has not the slenderest foundation in the authoritative records of Scripture. It is set down as an outwork protecting the citadel of Christ's perfection. But if our Lord's holy nature requires a Mother born immaculate, why should the same immaculate conception not be required of her who was mother to Mary? At what point are we to admit a sinful human ancestry to the Holy One? The

The Virgin's Veil

doctrine is created out of nothing, imposed by the mere *ipse dixit* of the Papacy. Is Christ's perfection in any degree safeguarded by a baseless invention, not even entertained for a millennium subsequent to Apostolic times? When the infallible Pope, Innocent III., declared that, unlike Eve, "Mary was produced in sin," can Pope Pius IX. be also infallible when in 1854 he pronounces the Immaculate Conception of Mary to be a dogma of the Catholic Faith which must be believed as a condition of salvation? One sees how abject is the mental stultification of those who, at the bidding of modern authorities, can receive a make-belief as if it were an attested historical fact. One also instinctively shrinks, not merely from the myth so absolutely without warrant, but even more from the impertinence of the intrusion into the sanctities and secrets of that over which Scripture has thrown a reverent veil of silence.

What is Mary's dignity in the heavens to-day? The Roman Catholic Church calls her "Mother of God,"¹ "Queen of Heaven," "Star of the Sea," "Lady and Mistress of the Universe," and "Queen

Queen of
Heaven

¹ The title Theotokos was first given (Council of Ephesus, 431 A.D.) as an assertion of the entire Godhood of her Son.

The People and the Priest

of Mercy." (In like fashion, the mariners of pagan Rome worshipped Venus as "Stella Maris" and "Regina Cœlorum.") Our Anglo-Catholic authority quotes with approval Bishop Hall's exclamation: "O Blessed Mary, he cannot bless thee too much that deifies thee not." Her exaltation gradually advanced through the darkening centuries till at last she became something like a Female Divinity. The progress of this cult may be observed in the art of the different centuries. "The first pictures of the early Christian ages simply represent the Woman. By and by we find outlines of the Mother and the Child. In an after age, the Son is seen sitting on a throne, with the Mother crowned, but sitting as yet below Him. In an age still later, the crowned Mother on a level with the Son. Later still, the Mother on a throne above the Son. And lastly, a Romish picture represents the Eternal Son in wrath, about to destroy the earth, and the Virgin Intercessor interposing, pleading by significant attitude her maternal rights and redeeming the world from His vengeance."¹

Assump-
tion and
Apothe-
osis

Legendary stories arose regarding her, in which fanciful additions were made to her biography. Most of these are childish and incredible fables, lacking in moral dignity and bearing on their face their historical worthlessness. The Roman

¹ F. W. Robertson's *Sermons*, II. xviii.

The Virgin's Veil

Church supplies us with the names of her father and mother, and has canonised them as St Joachim and St Anne; but authentic history is ignorant of them. Upon her "Assumption" into heaven at the hour of death — so the trusted Roman theologian, Liguori, tells—the angels sang "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the Queen of glory shall come in!" Virgins, saints, prophets, the celestial host, met and saluted her. The three Divine Persons, establishing her throne at the right hand of Jesus, declared her universal Queen of Heaven and Earth, and commanded angels and all creatures to recognise her for their Queen.¹ And this command has been faithfully carried out.

She is worshipped and invoked in Catholic countries more frequently and devoutly than Christ is. "We fly beneath thy shelter, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, and deliver us from all our perils, O glorious and blessed Virgin." "Let me but cling to thee; save me, my Hope; save me from Hell." Such are specimen prayers offered to her under the express approval of the Pope. And such prayers, it is to be observed, are not—as **At Mary's Feet** Roman Catholics say when on the defensive—mere requests that she will intercede on the suppliant's behalf, but they are prayers to herself;

¹ Condensed from Liguori's *Glories of Mary*, pp. 497-505.

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she is invoked on her own account as Saviour from peril and from Hell. The last words which the Roman ritual puts into the lips of the dying Catholic are these: "Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, do thou protect me from the foe, and receive me in the hour of death."

The Rosary

The worship of Mary is more popular than the worship of the Son of God, and is encouraged in the highest quarters. There are twice as many feasts in the year to Mary as there are to Christ. In the popular devotion of the Rosary, which is made up of one hundred and sixty-six beads, the Roman Catholic has to recite one "Creed," fifteen "Our Fathers," and a hundred and fifty "Hail Marys"—ten times more to Mary than to God himself. In the "Angelus," recited three times a day, three "Hail Marys" have to be said each time, and no devotion of similar kind is rendered to God or Christ.

In manuals of devotion, in her chapels and images, in pilgrimages to her honour, as well as in the language used of her in books of Catholic theology, one sees how vast a proportion of divine worship has been diverted to her.

The Glories of Mary

Liguori's *Glories of Mary* is a book approved and recommended by the Pope and the "Sacred Congregation of Rites," who declared that there was "nothing worthy of censure," a book bearing also the imprimatur of Cardinals Wiseman and

The Virgin's Veil

Manning; and this standard work of Roman Catholic theology speaks thus of Mary:

“God, before the birth of Mary, complained by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel that there was no one to rise up and withhold Him from chastising sinners, but He could find no one, for this office was reserved for our Blessed Lady, who withholds His arm until He is pacified.”

Prayers to Mary are defended on the plea that, if one may ask his pious friends on earth to pray for him, much more may he ask Mary, who is so close to God, to intercede on his behalf. That is the answer given to critics. The reader will judge for himself whether that is all that is contained in their addresses to Mary:

“We ask many things of God, and do not obtain them; we ask them of Mary, and obtain them. . . . Sometimes we shall be sooner heard and saved by invoking her holy name, than that of Jesus Christ. . .

“Whoever asks and wishes to obtain graces without the intercession of Mary attempts to fly without wings; for, as Pharaoh sent to Joseph all those who applied to him, saying ‘Go to Joseph,’ so God, when we supplicate Him for favours, sends us to Mary—‘Go to Mary.’

“The Virgin has all power in heaven as on earth. . . . When she prays, she seems to command rather than to request, to be a mistress

The People and the Priest

rather than a handmaid. . . . All obey the commands of Mary, even God Himself. . . . Mary is omnipotent, since the Queen, by every law, must enjoy the same privileges as the King.”¹

Her new
Sorrow

Such language, surrounded by much more of like kind, strikes one dumb. All this to be spoken of the Maid and Mother of Nazareth! The type of retiring modesty and pure womanhood to be made Saviour of humanity and omnipotent controller of the Almighty! If we could imagine her to be conscious of all that has gathered round her name, what shrinking and sorrow must be hers!

They have taken the humble Mary, who in Scripture fades out of sight, giving place to Christ, and elevated her to the sublime dignity of a Goddess. This Female Divinity sways the Eternal, making Him do her bidding. If we were to take this teaching literally at its word, we should be bound to call it *blasphemy*! But we know that by most worshippers it is devoutly and not blasphemously intended. And one cannot but believe that, as the Great Spirit is a just interpreter of human spirits and is bound by no technical formulæ, He is able to see in this misdirected worship of a frail woman what is really and at heart intended for the Divine. Yet, if we treated this worship of Mary in the way

True
Worship
mis-
directed

¹ *Glories of Mary*, pp. 149, 150, 189, 202, 207. See also pp. 19, 178, 219, 263, etc.

The Virgin's Veil

in which we treat pagan Polytheism, we should be compelled to pronounce it to be essential idolatry, and more blasphemous than pagan idolatry because maintained in presence of clearer light. It is, unlike pagan worship of Ceres and Juno, uplifting and beneficent in its influence on the devout, because that which is worshipped in Mary is a lofty moral conception, a chaste, pitiful, and pure ideal.

Shall we, then, sanction approvingly the Catholic's claim that this worship of Mary is merely an indirect way of worshipping God from whom she receives all her graces and glories? It is what the enlightened Buddhist priest in Japan would say of the giant Buddha image at Kamakura: that it is not itself the *very* Amita-Buddha, but the visible representation of the Deity, and the channel through which the devout heart can most easily worship the Unseen. However charitable, we are bound to urge that the Son of God is the *complete* and only *εἰδωλον*, or image, of the Unseen God. It is vain for Catholic writers to say, in books intended for Protestants, that to God, and to God alone, they offer "latreia" (adoration), and that what they bring to Mary and the saints is only "hyper-^{or}dulia" and "dulia" (homage). No adoration ^{"Hyper-} ^{dulia"?} offered to God could surpass the expressions of prostrate homage and devout trust which they present to Mary. Whatever the theory may be,

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in actual fact what they give to her is the best, richest, warmest, most sublime, and most precious that they are capable of pouring out before the Divine.

Mary would say to those who fall at her feet what the angel said to John: "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets: worship God."

It is not enough, however, to negative the glorification, almost the deification, of Mary. Its *raison d'être* must be sought and found.

Why so
favoured?

How comes it that the peasant-mother of Nazareth is exalted to be Mother of God and Queen of Heaven; that her worship and chapels and images are so popular with the masses of Catholics; that the distraught and sorrow-ridden and sin-smitten will kiss the feet of Mary with passionate affection and clinging trust? No gigantic error such as this arises solely from folly and nothingness. For every such wide-spread practice a root will be found in human nature.

The secret, no doubt, lies in the profound yearning of the troubled human heart for the motherly in God, for that which is "pure womanly" in the Almighty. Naughty and conscience-stricken children, who dread the strict justice of their father, will hide their face in their mother's warm lap and

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trust their faults to her more sympathetic treatment; and they will even make strong their case before their father by previously winning the mother as intercessor.

Men, when they conceive God, conceive an embodiment of infinite masculine strength, infinite rectitude, infinite holiness; and they dread the ordeal of presenting themselves before the Infinite Male. Very welcome to their frightened hearts is the thought of a Mother-God or "Mother of God,"—as contrasted with a Father and a Son—of a woman's tender pity, sweet purity, and gracious affection. What a charm that chaste maternal figure has had for the woful sons of men, for even the robber, the manslayer, the foul roué! To those who have lost their best and dearest, how consoling is the contemplation of her whose soul was pierced by the sword of sorrow, sorrow "sharper than a serpent's tooth" because connected with the disgrace of a gibbet!

The
Mother in
Heaven

It is this craving for the motherly in the Almighty, for motherly intercession and womanly grace and tenderness, that has made the Mother of Jesus the most beloved object of Catholic devotion, and has drawn forth raptures of trust and affection from the stained lips of numberless wearied souls.

But this warm thought of Mary detracts from

The People and the Priest

The
Pacifier
of God

the complete humanity of Christ. It implies that God is less human-hearted than one of His creatures, less pitiful and sympathetic than a woman of earth; that His just wrath is so ill-restrained that a maid of Palestine must arrest His vengeful arm and move His heart to mercy.

The spokesman of the Catholics, Liguori, writes thus:—

“Why does the Church name Mary Queen of mercy? Because we believe that she opens the depths of the mercy of God to whom she will, when she will, and as she will; so that not even the vilest sinner is lost if Mary protects him.”

“She knows so well how to appease the divine justice with her tender and wise entreaties, that God Himself blesses her for it, and, as it were, thanks her that she thus restrains Him from abandoning and punishing them as they deserve.”

The
Human
Litany

“If thou fearest, on account of thy sins, that an angry God may wish to avenge Himself upon thee, what art thou to do? Go to the hope of sinners, namely, Mary” (pp. 31, 220, 236).

God receives the homage addressed to absolute justice and power; Mary receives the more precious devotion which the heart spends upon warm, loving goodness: so she has the better part. (In like fashion Christ has often been set over against God—to the discredit of God: Christ pitiful and loving, God sternly just, impelled by

The Virgin's Veil

wrath which Christ requires to appease and restrain. Even Protestants are coming to see that Christ is the reflection of the real Father, the manifestation and vision of God; that God is Christian.)

However much we may revolt from the theological status ascribed to Mary, we cannot but look tenderly upon the pathetic sight of anxious men and women who cling to the feet of her who represents to them the *Mother in God*. All that Catholics see in Mary is true; true, but of *God*—a veritable, detached aspect of His character. The grace and purity and love of Mary have to be transferred to Him who gathers in Himself all the perfections of all creation. There is a “Mary” in God, as there is a “Christ” in God, and it may very well be the case that the clear-sighted charity of God perceives *whom* Catholics ignorantly worship, and accepts as really His the sweet devotion directed to the Womanly divine ideal. None the less is this devotion and worship of Mary misdirected, and a detraction from God as revealed in the Friend of sinners.

The strange thing is that Jesus should not have been selected as the object of this devotion and of the human cry for tender sympathy. It is because the “real Jesus,” human to the “red-ripe of the heart,” was lost in theological mists, was clad with the robes of a barrister or a magis-

Mary's
Gain
Christ's
Loss

The People and the Priest

The Gentle- ness of Jesus

trate. There is now a manifest return to the real Jesus, a recovery of His "Divine Humanity." The fascination of the cult of Mary can be broken only by disclosing the spell of the full, pure, warm humanity of the very *Son of Man*, His womanly kindness to shame-faced people who had gone wrong, such kind-heartedness as drew from their hesitating lips the most sacred confidences of their heart. What they imagined in Mary, all the healthiest, tenderest part of it, is to be found in the Jesus whom Zacchæus, Peter, and the Magdalene knew—the same virgin soul of purity united with such a motherly heart as, like the mother-bird with her chickens, would fain gather all the wearied misguided world under its wing.

The cure for what is called "Mariolatry" is, that veils of misconception should be drawn aside, and that Christ should *look* out on us as He looked on Peter and be seen *as He is*. Then in Him men's hunted minds would find a "nest of pleasant thought" and a mediator filled with love potent with man and God. "See the Christ stand!"

XIX

The Appeal to History

MANY noble services have been rendered to the cause of mankind by priests, monasteries, and consecrated Catholics. It delights one to honour the work they have done for the relief of poverty and crime, and for the preservation of literature. One pays hearty homage not only to Thomas à Kempis and St Francis of Assisi, but also to other types of Catholic sainthood—even though the sainthood be monkish, ascetic, and in marked contrast with the healthy, natural life of Christ. The Test of Time

But, in spite of all such considerations, the total influence of Catholicism has, in the course of centuries, been detrimental to the welfare of the race, a dead-weight upon society, national liberty and development, and even religion itself. History tells no lies. It gives opportunity to systems and ideas to bring forth their fruit and shew their ultimate worth as single lives cannot. And history tells us that, whenever and wherever priestly power has been dominant, its influence has been on the whole calamitous.

The People and the Priest

The Hebrew priesthood were supine and impotent at those periods when their people were sinking into idolatry and sin. It was not the priests who attempted to reform the morals or the religion of the country; it was the prophets, such as Amos and Isaiah. And these reformer-prophets, when they strove to call back the chosen people to the One God and His pure religion and holy life, found the priests their bitterest opponents. When the priests were most in power, the people were deepest in corruption and error. When the Son of God himself came to redeem men, it was the priesthood—not the World, not the State, but the priesthood—that procured His crucifixion.

Under a priestly system of religion, forms and days and externals tend to overlie righteousness and truth. Undue stress is laid upon *fasting* Communion, abstinence from meat on certain days, genuflexions, and ritual. And, however high the intention of the better priests may be, the inevitable tendency of the system, as a whole, is for these *modes* of religious observance to displace the moral and spiritual demands of Christ.

History shews that, notwithstanding the goodness of individual priests and owing to the system, wherever the priesthood has had a full opportunity of working its will, it has brought the people into subjection, and placed them in

The Dead
Hand

The Appeal to History

social and mental servility. It has held a despotic mastery over conscience and mind, over the home and its privacies, over the state and its policy. The priests, as a whole, have been the foes of liberty and obstacles to progress and enlightenment. In maintaining their supremacy unbroken, they have kept the multitudes in ignorance, refusing education beyond the barest rudiments. They have fostered superstitions, reverence for bogus relics, and acceptance of apocryphal lives of the saints.

The essential human nature of the priests was not worse, nor was it better, than that of Protestants. If *we* ourselves had been bred and trained under like conditions, and if we had been charged with the same powers and privileges, we should have had the same influence.

Further, Sacerdotalism has been the most prolific breeder of Scepticism.

Brave minds revolt from the tyranny of priestly authority. Truth-loving men, disgusted with religion under the form of aves and images, confessionals and blood-liquefactions, infallibility and superstition, turn away in revulsion from religion altogether, and take refuge in free-thinking. It is not private judgment, though Newman says it is, that leads to scepticism. It is much more frequently the intolerable oppression of priestcraft, the formalism of Catholic ceremonial, the

How
Sceptics
are made

The People and the Priest

stifling weight of incredible legends and debasing superstitions. It is, in Browning's words, to

“Hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong, thick, stupefying incense-smoke.”

It is visible to every eye in Italy and Spain, and in some measure in France. Why, for example, did the author of *Vie de Jesus* become a sceptic?

Renan

Renan took the world into his confidence on this subject, when in his *Souvenirs* he said: “There were times when I was sorry that I was not a Protestant, so that I might be a philosopher without ceasing to be a Christian. Then I recognised that the Catholics alone are consistent. A single error proves that the Church is not infallible; one weak part proves that the book is not a revealed one. Outside rigid orthodoxy there was nothing, so far as I could see, except Freethought after the manner of the French school of the eighteenth century.” And so, because no Christianity was available save the incredible creed of Catholicism, Renan's mind swung far forth into unbelief. Such scepticism is the necessary revulsion from an overburdening system of Catholic sacerdotalism.

Looking again at the countries of Christendom, we see what are the moral and social results of Sacerdotalism and Catholicism.

The Appeal to History

What has it done for Mexico, for Italy, for Spain? It has left them hopelessly behind the other nations of the Western world in social condition, national character, and international influence. The illiterate form 72 per cent. of the population in Italy, 80 per cent. in Spain, and 93 per cent. in Mexico.

The Wit-
ness of
Nations

Take Switzerland and put the Catholic cantons, such as Lucerne, in contrast with the Protestant cantons, such as Berne and Geneva. Cross to Canada, and compare the moral, social, and economic condition of Protestant Ontario with Catholic Quebec, the reformed half with the priest-ridden half. Coming nearer home, one may compare Scotland, where the Reformation was thorough, with Catholic Ireland: the economic, social, and educational contrast is decisive.

There, on the national scale, the object-lesson is unmistakable. Errors of judgment *may* arise in drawing conclusions from individuals and their witness; but the testimony of nations and of centuries is sure. When we seek the testimony of history and of national experience, we find that Catholic sacerdotalism is the foe of education, of progress, of liberty, of enlightenment, of social elevation, of national stability, and of general prosperity and greatness.

It is not in the British Isles among our Catholics that one can find the true outcome of Catholicism. Here it is modified by its Protestant atmosphere.

Pure
British
Catholic-
ism

The People and the Priest

Here priestly tyranny, ignorance, persecution, are over-borne by the prevailing principles and habits of a reformed nation. Here public opinion and the environment of liberty and of education affect the issue. But when we go to Catholic countries, where Catholicism is a vast political as well as sacerdotal organisation, its full harvest is distinctly exposed to view.

The history of England sufficiently reveals the influence of Catholicism. It was the Reformation which inaugurated England's greatness, which led to the unparalleled outburst of literary power, the extension of commerce, and the advancement of social progress and national prosperity.

Dear-
bought
Liberties

It would be well for Englishmen if they would consider from what quarter their light and liberties came. They should remember at what a price in blood and anguish their best-prized privileges were bought by heroic forefathers. They should ask whether the priesthood ever fought for the enlightenment and emancipation of a people, or ever offered freedom of conscience.

Cardinal
Manning

Cardinal Manning declared: "It is the fixed policy of the Roman *curia* to make this imperial race bow its head in obedience to the Pope as Vicar of Christ." There need be no alarmist fear of any such fate befalling the head of this imperial race—even although England has in recent years been solemnly dedicated to the special guardian

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care of the Virgin Mary and St Peter, who are now the patron saints of this country! But there is genuine cause for fearing that Sacerdotalism, of close kin to Romanism, may become the strong organised religious power in the land.

A remarkable passage in a speech of Lord Falkland on this subject—a man whose character was great and memorable—“hits off” much of the present trend of Anglo-Catholic Ritualism. It was spoken two centuries ago, but is still apt. It errs only by unjustly hinting dishonour on the part of Ritualists.

“It seemed their work [the Bishops’] to try how much of a Papist might be brought in without Popery, and to destroy as much as they could of the Gospel without bringing themselves into danger of being destroyed by the law. Some of them have so industriously laboured to deduce themselves from Rome that they have given great suspicion that, in gratitude, they desire to return thither, or at least to meet it half-way. Some have evidently laboured to bring in an English, though not a Roman, Popery; I mean not only the outside and dress of it, but, equally absolute, a blind dependence of the people upon the clergy and the clergy upon themselves, and have opposed the Popery beyond the sea that they may settle one beyond the water—namely, at Lambeth. Nay, common report is more than ordinarily false if none of them have

Lord
Falkland

The People and the Priest

found a way to reconcile the opinions of Rome to the preferments of England, and be so absolutely, directly, and cordially Papists that it is all £1500 a year can do to keep them from confessing it."

The Secret Societies which exist in the Anglican Church and the Romish practices which they admittedly foster combine with other indications to attest the substance, if not justify the terms, of this charge.

Whither? Anglo-Catholics are bent upon securing the religious education of the youth of the nation, so as to win the next generation to their way of faith. Unlike many easy and weak Evangelicals, they are bold, uncompromising, open-eyed, untiring in their energy, and diplomatic. One ungrudgingly honours their heroic enthusiasm and unselfish labours. But the fact that among them may be found much, perhaps most, of the religious vitality of the Episcopal Church will not avert the natural issues of their system.

Feeders for Rome Cardinal Vaughan has said of the Ritualists: "They are doing our work much better than we ourselves could do it. They are sowing the seed while we, with folded hands, are standing by waiting to reap the harvest." If ever a nation had unmistakable lessons from the experience of sacerdotalism and its fruits, it is the British nation. God has spoken, in great events of history, in signal examples and startling consequences. Any open ear may

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hear His voice declare that only in the simplicity of primitive Christianity can Britain be secure, great, and happy.

Christ has set us free, free from Star-chamber and Inquisition, free from enslaving mental subserviency, superstition, and ignorance, and has placed us under His own spiritual mastery and personal spell. “Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.”

History and experience enjoin us to make our appeal to Jesus Christ as Lord; to take our Christianity from the Founder of it; to test all beliefs by the spirit and general character of His own teaching; to go to the fountainhead for cleansing of conscience and the words of peace; to measure all individuals and Churches by the degree to which they approach the life and mind of Christ; to be simply Christ-men, Christians.

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